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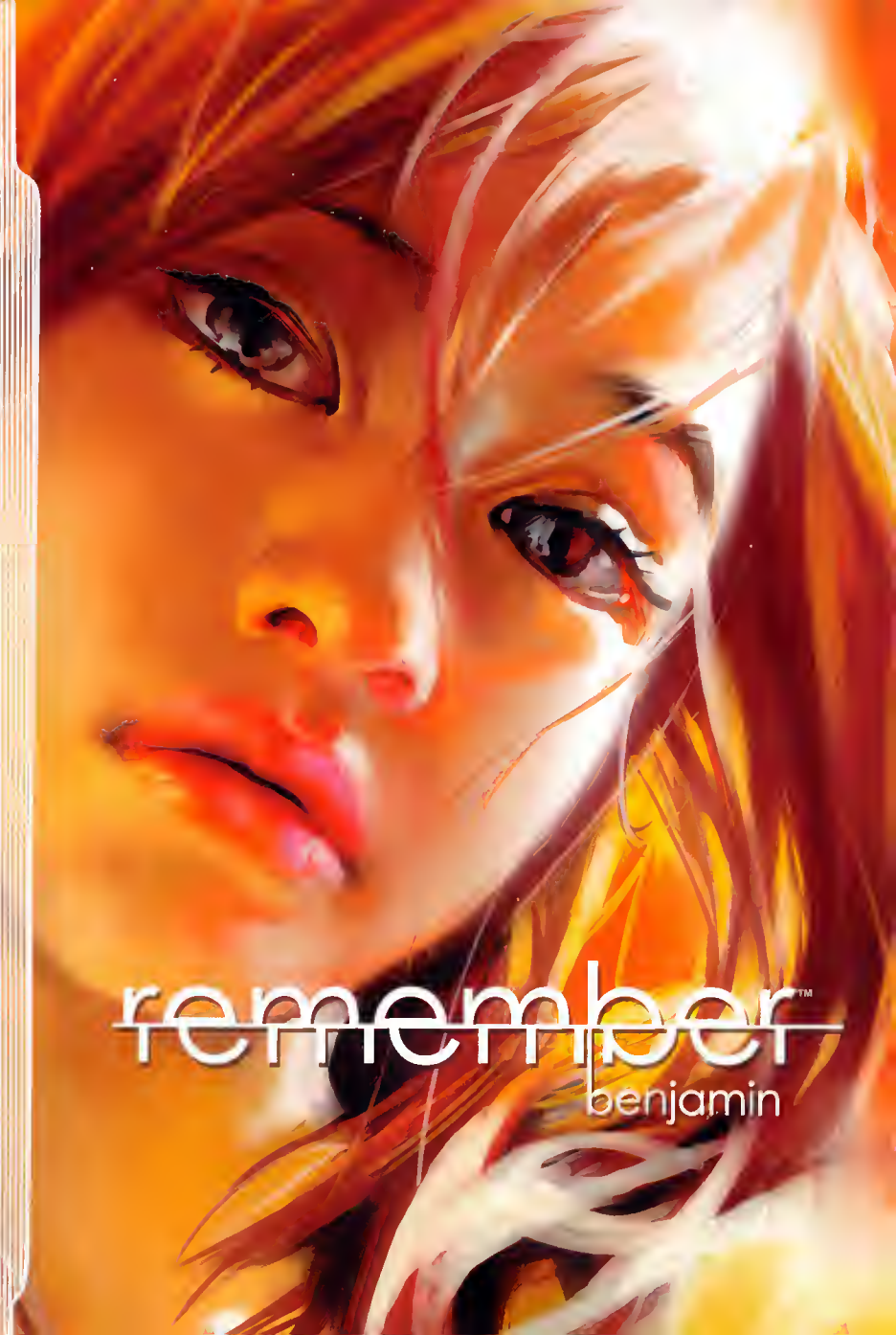
REMEMBER

BENJAMIN

GRAPHIC NOVELS



remember

benjamin

remember™

benjamin

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Do not forget this book. Do not forget its author.

Preface

by Ma Rong Cheng, President of Tian Xia Books, Ltd. and well-known manhua master

Ever since my manhua were published in mainland China, I've often had the chance to travel the country for all kinds of events. This has allowed me to approach a great many friends from the mainland, and to learn firsthand about the general state of manhua in the heart of China. Among these creators, the one I value above all others is Benjamin, the luminous qualities of whose work struck me at first glance.

Benjamin's style is utterly unique and reflects a very strong personality. Layouts, panels, pacing, and storytelling are all impregnated in equal measure by his distinctive charm. All you have to do to appreciate the exceptionally original world of his manhua is pick up one of his books.

The Chinese media often asks me my point of view on the development of manhua in mainland China. I believe that only as authors with such marked personal styles as Benjamin emerge can mainland Chinese manhua lay claim to any originality, and to treatment as an equal not only with manhua in other provinces, but comics abroad as well, making its individuality apparent.

For now, Benjamin has offered us his latest book, *Remember*. I not only congratulate him for it, but recommend it to everyone as a work worthy of being part of their collections.

Hong Kong, September 2004

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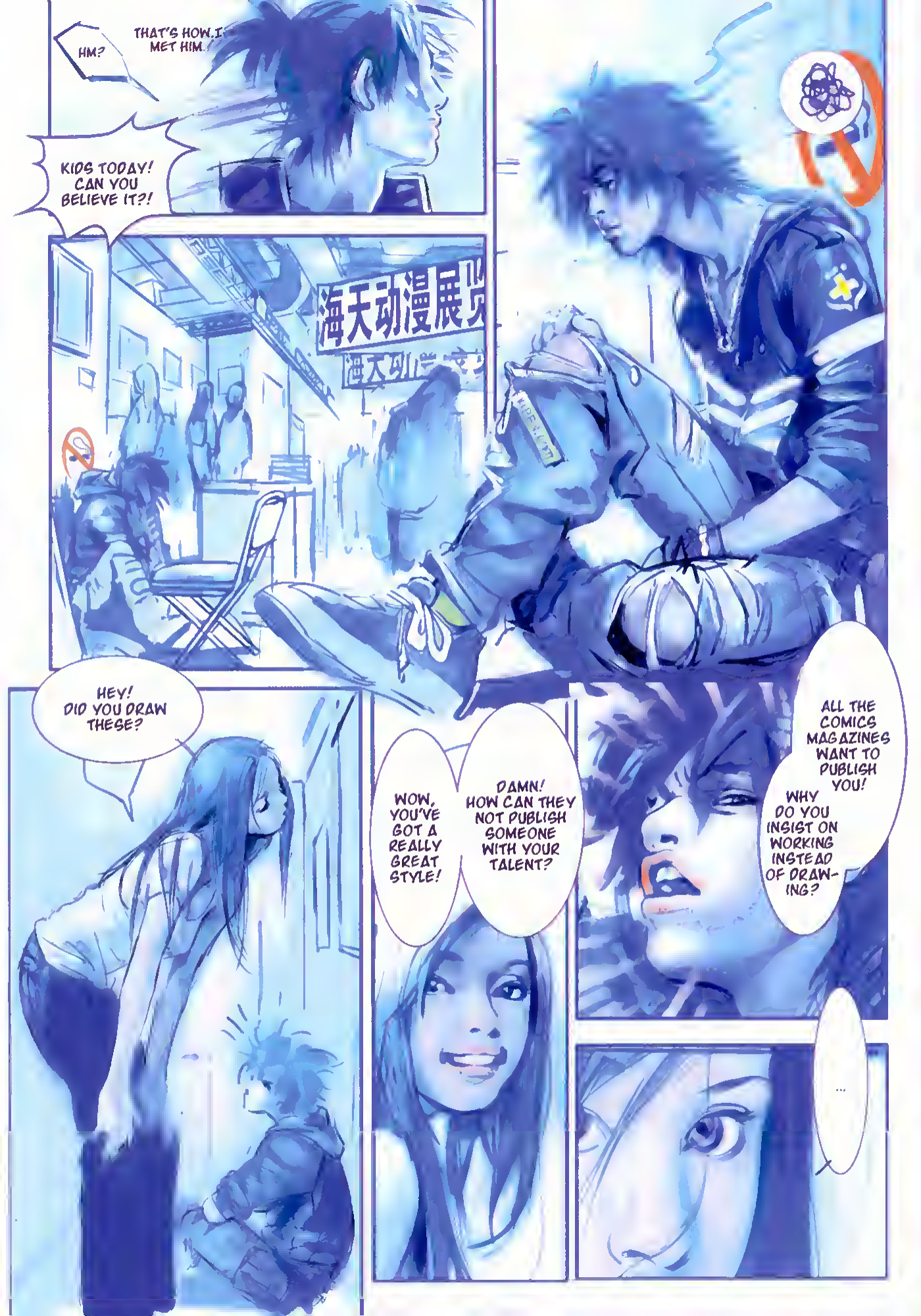
Afterword 127

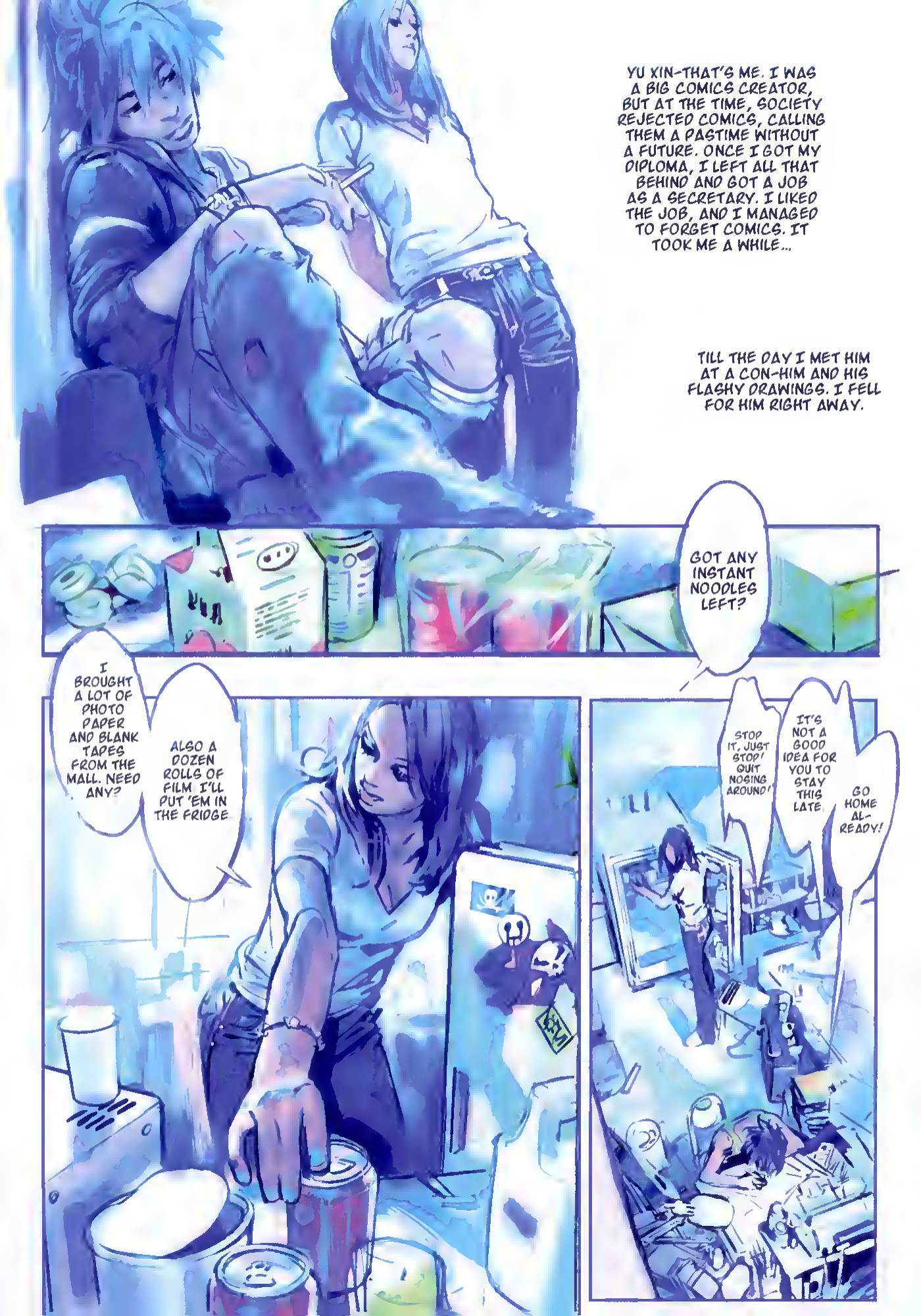
BENJAMIN

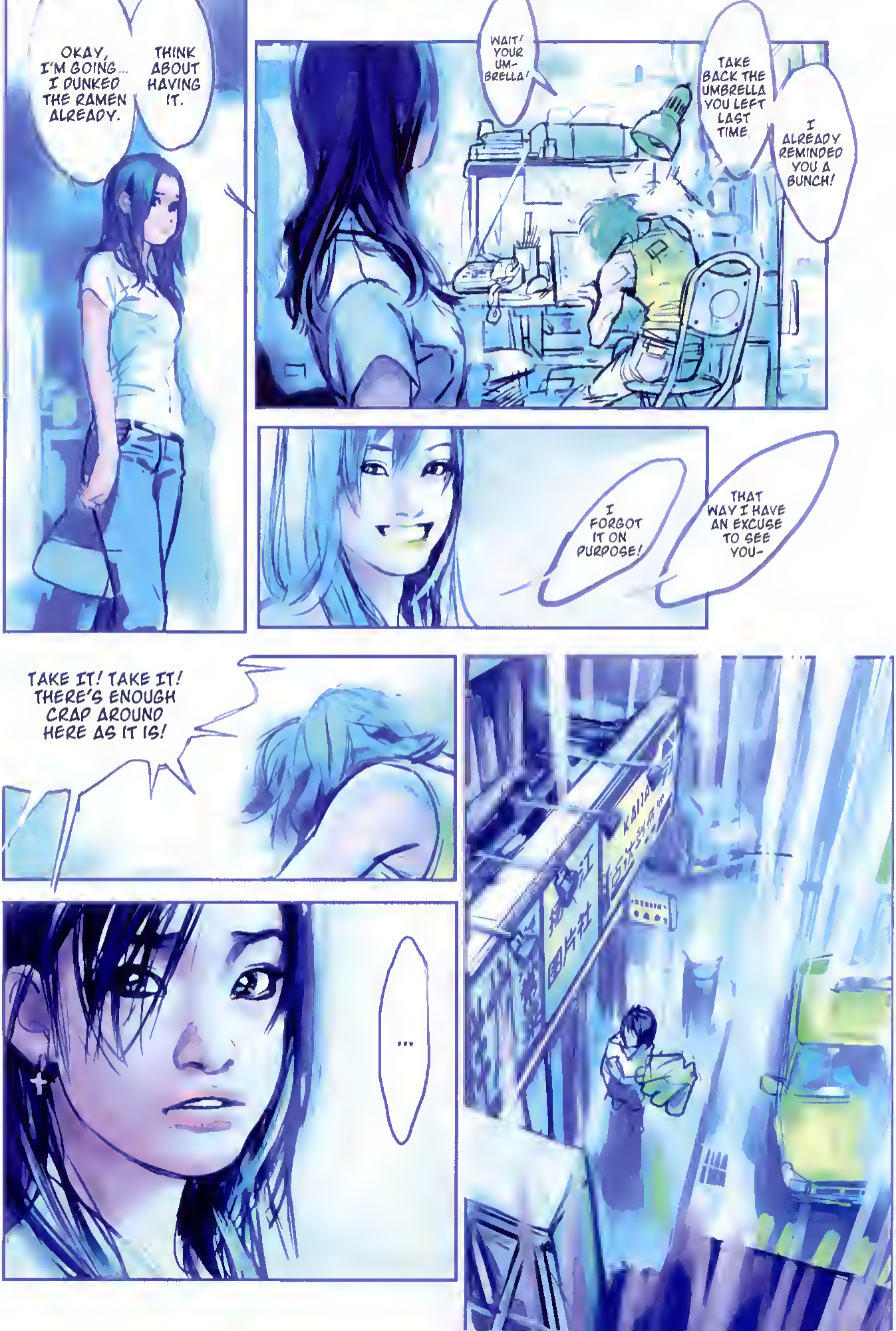
No one can fly.
No one can remember.
password: memories

WHAT A DISASTER! HE ATTACKED THE JUDGE!
OF COURSE THE COSPLAY COMPETITION'LL GET CANCELLED NOW.
THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF!
UH
THAT GUY! HE TOTALLY DID IT ON PURPOSE!
THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF!
OH GOD! HIS PULSE IS GOING UP!
THAT BOY..
I WAS ATTENDING A COMIC CON AS A GUEST AND A PROFESSIONAL THAT DAY
YU XIN*

* YU XIN: RAIN HEART

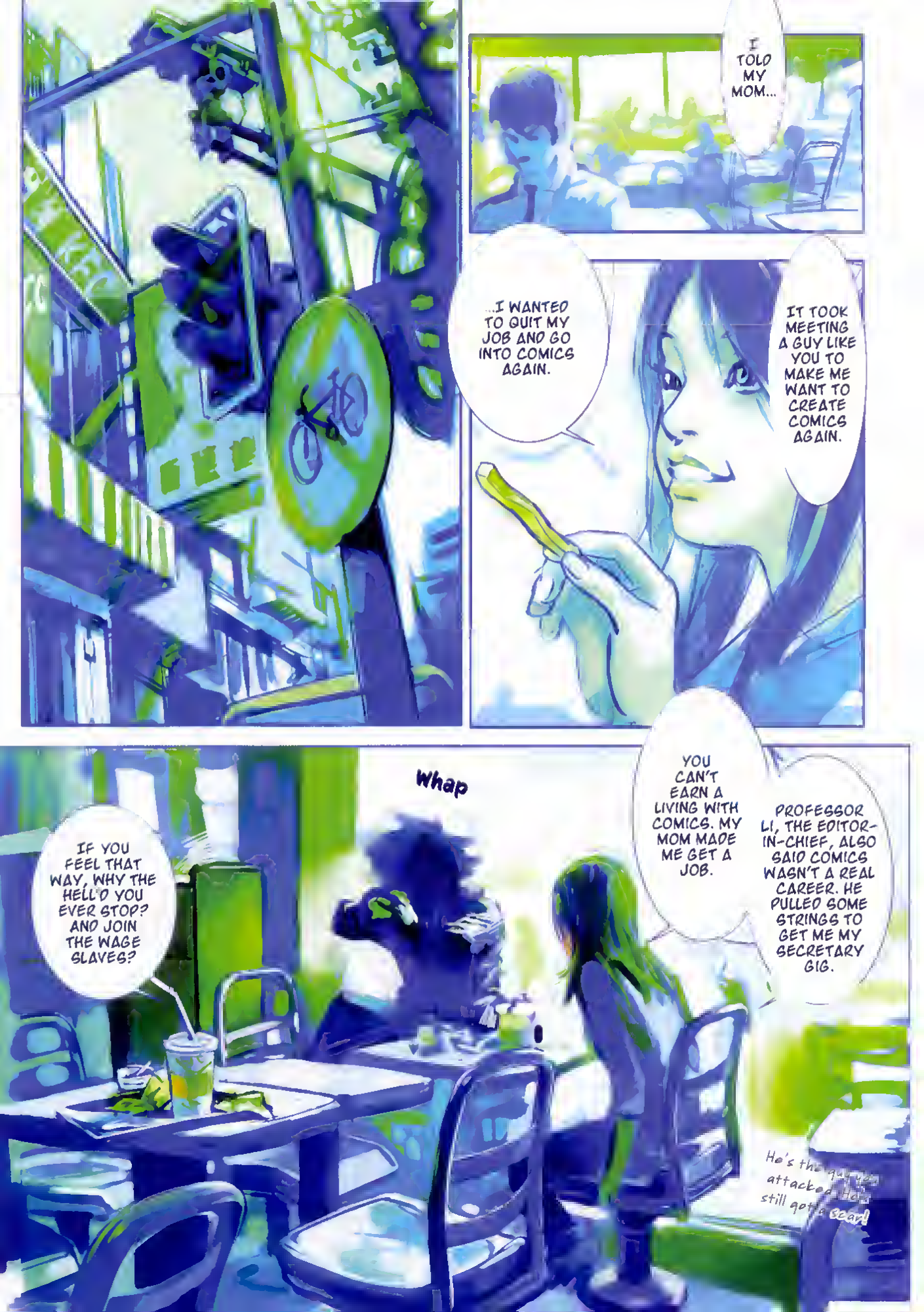

HM?
THAT'S HOW I MET HIM.
KIDS TODAY! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!
海天动漫展
HEY! DID YOU DRAW THESE?
WOW, YOU'VE GOT A REALLY GREAT STYLE!
DAMN! HOW CAN THEY NOT PUBLISH SOMEONE WITH YOUR TALENT?
ALL THE COMICS MAGAZINES WANT TO PUBLISH YOU!
WHY DO YOU INSIST ON WORKING INSTEAD OF DRAWING?
...

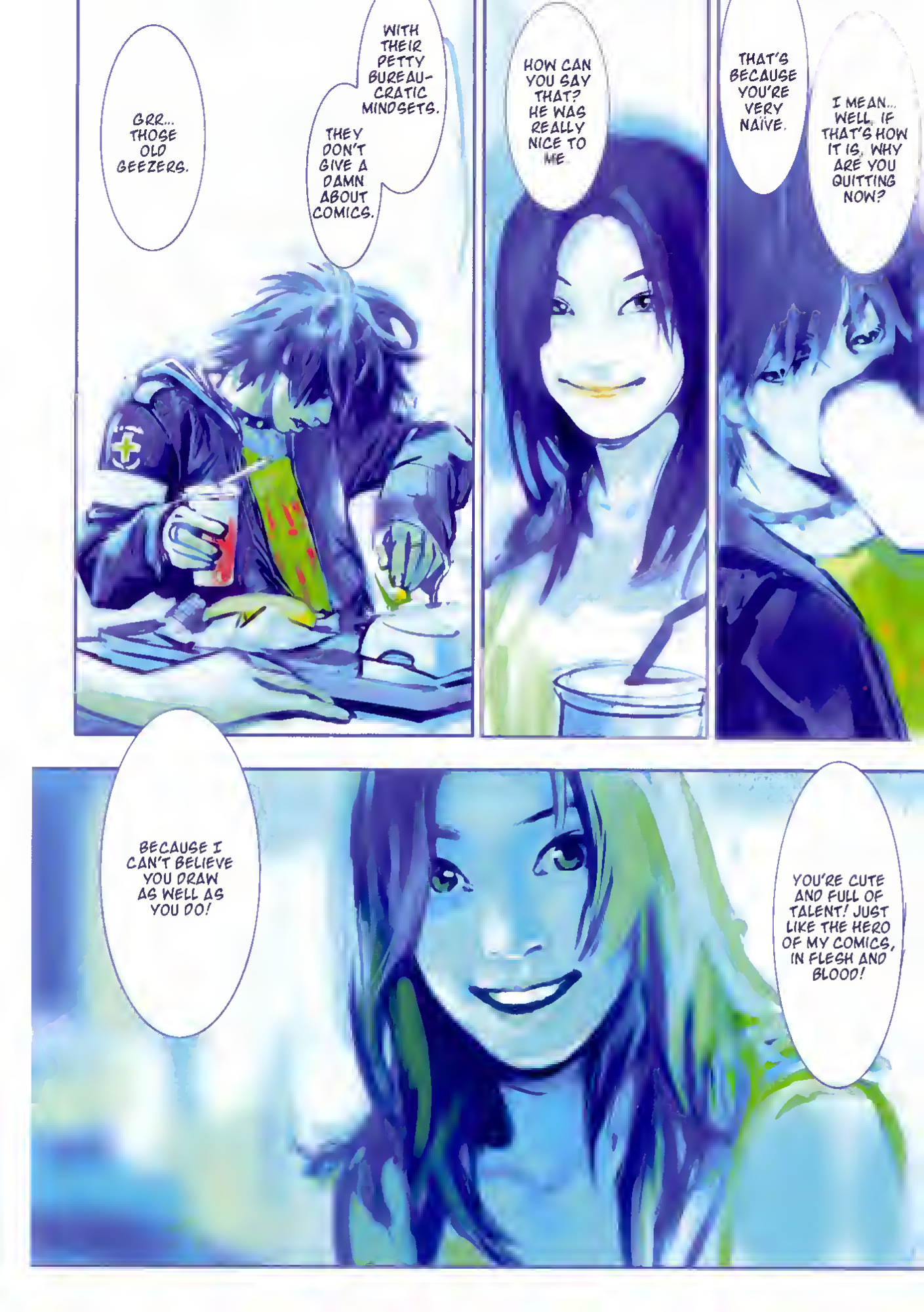

YU XIN-THAT'S ME. I WAS A BIG COMICS CREATOR, BUT AT THE TIME, SOCIETY REJECTED COMICS, CALLING THEM A PASTIME WITHOUT A FUTURE. ONCE I GOT MY DIPLOMA, I LEFT ALL THAT BEHIND AND GOT A JOB AS A SECRETARY. I LIKED THE JOB, AND I MANAGED TO FORGET COMICS. IT TOOK ME A WHILE...
TILL THE DAY I MET HIM AT A CON-HIM AND HIS FLASHY DRAWINGS. I FELL FOR HIM RIGHT AWAY.
GOT ANY INSTANT NOODLES LEFT?
I BROUGHT A LOT OF PHOTO PAPER AND BLANK TAPES FROM THE MALL. NEED ANY?
ALSO A DOZEN ROLLS OF FILM. I'LL PUT 'EM IN THE FRIDGE
STOP IT, JUST STOP! QUIT NOSING AROUND!
IT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA FOR YOU TO STAY THIS LATE
GO HOME ALREADY!


OKAY, I'M GOING... I DUNKED THE RAMEN ALREADY.
THINK ABOUT HAVING IT.
WAIT! YOUR UM-BRELLA!
TAKE BACK THE UMBRELLA YOU LEFT LAST TIME
I ALREADY REMINDED YOU A BUNCH!
I FORGOT IT ON PURPOSE!
THAT WAY I HAVE AN EXCUSE TO SEE YOU-
TAKE IT! TAKE IT! THERE'S ENOUGH CRAP AROUND HERE AS IT IS!
...

BACK THEN, I WAS A COMICS ARTIST, AND EVEN THOUGH I WAS NEVER ABLE TO PUBLISH ANYTHING IN THAT ROTTEN, EMPTY CAREER...
...I WAS ALREADY BETTER THAN THE OTHER CREATORS AROUND.
SO MUCH SO THAT THIS CHICK FELL IN LOVE WITH ME.

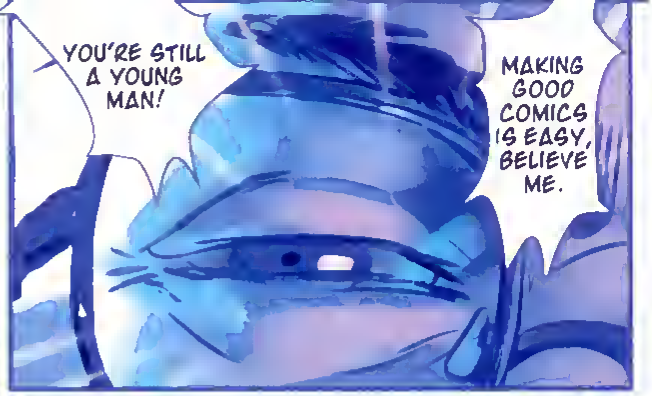
DON'T SAY THAT, MOM! YOU KNOW I LOVE COMICS.
SO LET ME LIVE MY LIFE, OKAY?
DON'T TRY TO INTIMIDATE ME!
I CAN'T GO TO WORK TODAY! OR TOMORROW EITHER!
FINE! YELL AS MUCH AS YOU WANT!
I WON'T GO BACK EVER!
Whoa.
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
MOM CAN TALK A LOT.
HAD ME SCARED ...
啪


I TOLD MY MOM...
...I WANTED TO QUIT MY JOB AND GO INTO COMICS AGAIN.
IT TOOK MEETING A GUY LIKE YOU TO MAKE ME WANT TO CREATE COMICS AGAIN.
Whap
IF YOU FEEL THAT WAY, WHY THE HELL'D YOU EVER STOP? AND JOIN THE WAGE SLAVES?
YOU CAN'T EARN A LIVING WITH COMICS. MY MOM MADE ME GET A JOB.
PROFESSOR LI, THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, ALSO SAID COMICS WASN'T A REAL CAREER. HE PULLED SOME STRINGS TO GET ME MY SECRETARY GIG.
He's the guy who attacked her. She still got a scar!

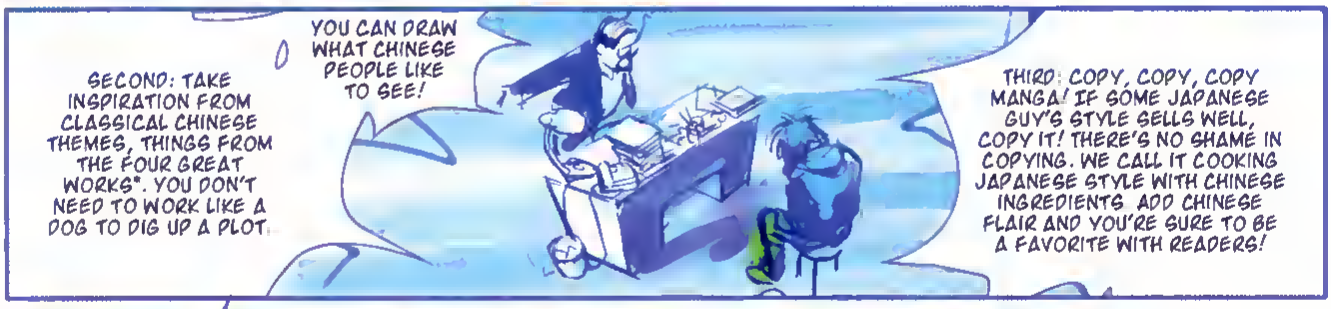

GRR... THOSE OLD GEEZERS.
THEY DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT COMICS.
WITH THEIR PETTY BUREAU-CRATIC MINDSETS.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? HE WAS REALLY NICE TO ME.
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE VERY NAÏVE.
I MEAN... WELL, IF THAT'S HOW IT IS, WHY ARE YOU QUITTING NOW?
BECAUSE I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DRAW AS WELL AS YOU DO!
YOU'RE CUTE AND FULL OF TALENT! JUST LIKE THE HERO OF MY COMICS, IN FLESH AND BLOOD!

噗
THAT GIRL JUST SAYS WHAT'S ON HER MIND.
SOME UNINFORMED READER COULD IMITATE THAT! PLUS, THAT GIRL'S SKIRT IS TOO SHORT!
@And you've shoving how that right in my face!
I CAN'T GET USED TO THESE FASHIONS ON THE STREET. DO I HAVE TO SEE THEM IN COMICS, TOO?
WHAT?? THEY'RE KISSING?

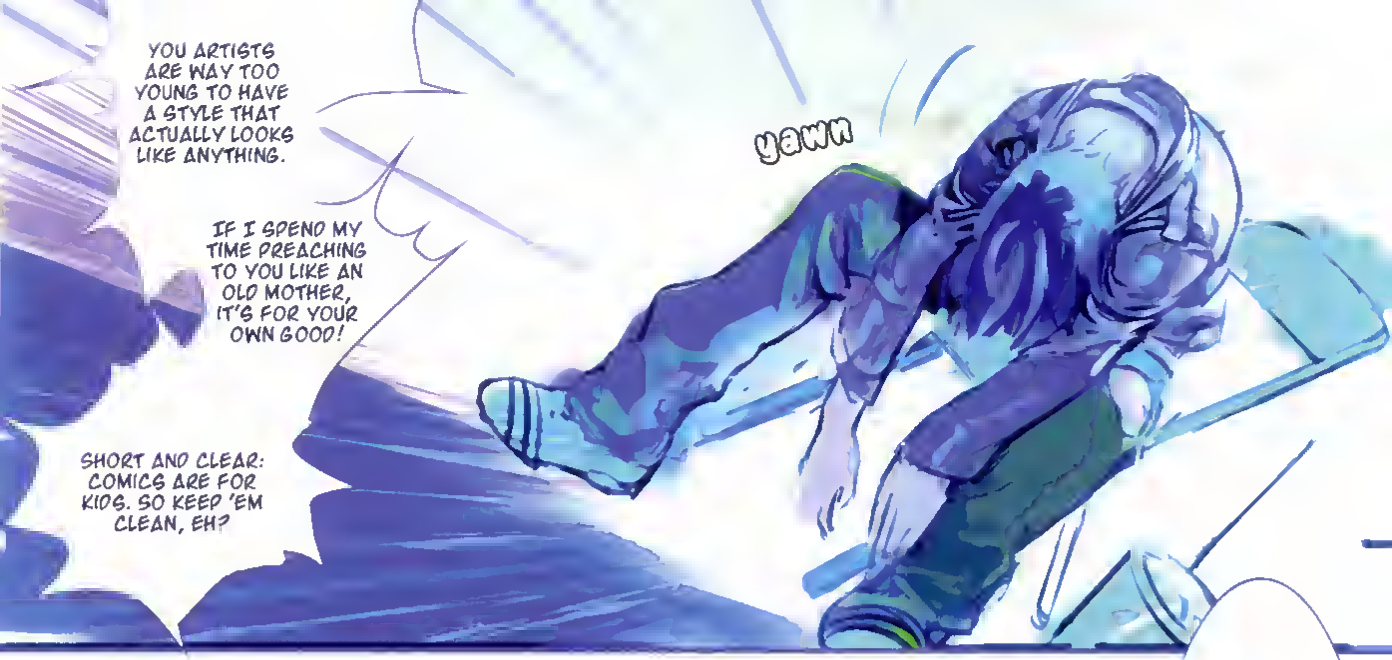
I WONDER IF HE RECOGNIZES ME... BUT I DON'T CARE.
THAT'S HOW IT IS OUT THERE! I NEED THEM TO LOOK THAT WAY FOR THE PLOT.

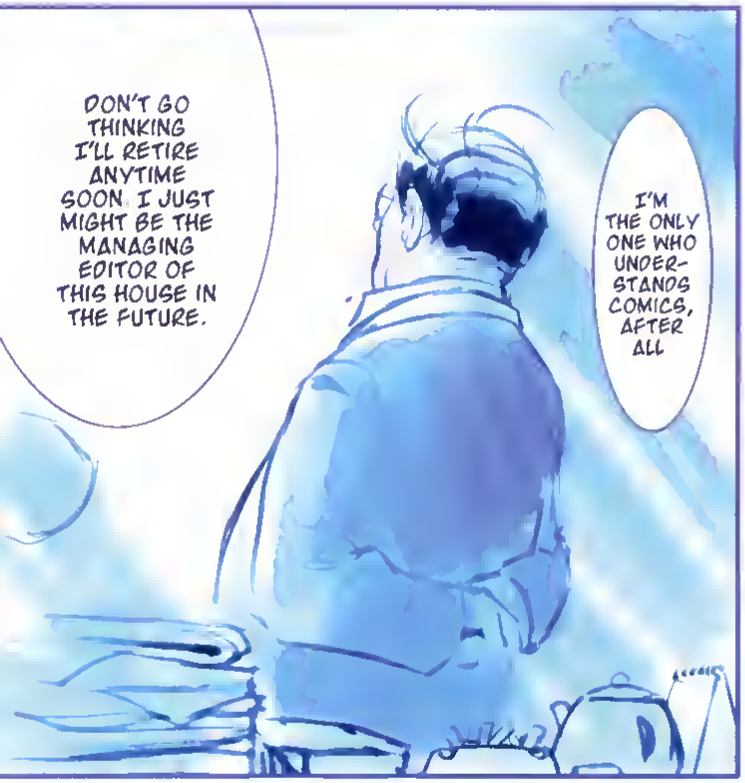

YOU'RE STILL A YOUNG MAN!
MAKING GOOD COMICS IS EASY, BELIEVE ME.

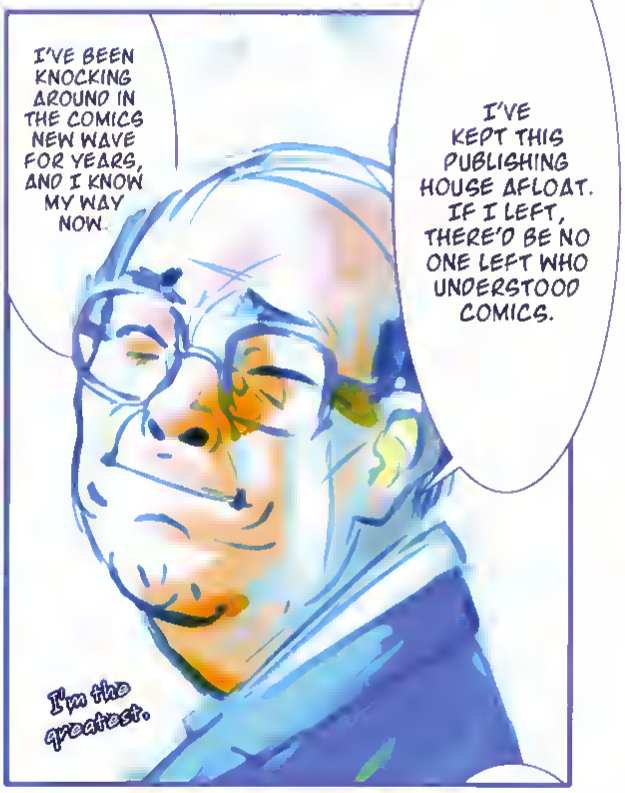
HERE ARE THE THREE DO'S AND THE THREE DON'TS. FIRST OFF, NO SCREWING. SECOND, NO KILLING AND NO BLOOD. AND THIRD, NEVER SHOW THE "THREE PARTS" OF A GIRL.
AS FOR THE THREE DO'S? FIRST, TALK ABOUT LOVE. TODAY'S READERS ARE TEENAGE GIRLS; WE HAVE TO TELL THEM ALL ABOUT LOVE WITHOUT SEX AND THE "THREE PARTS."


SECOND: TAKE INSPIRATION FROM CLASSICAL CHINESE THEMES, THINGS FROM THE FOUR GREAT WORKS*. YOU DON'T NEED TO WORK LIKE A DOG TO DIG UP A PLOT.
YOU CAN DRAW WHAT CHINESE PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE!
THIRD: COPY, COPY, COPY MANGA! IF SOME JAPANESE GUY'S STYLE SELLS WELL, COPY IT! THERE'S NO SHAME IN COPYING. WE CALL IT COOKING JAPANESE STYLE WITH CHINESE INGREDIENTS. ADD CHINESE FLAIR AND YOU'RE SURE TO BE A FAVORITE WITH READERS!

I ABSOLUTELY DO NOT BELIEVE READERS WILL LIKE AN ORIGINAL STYLE!
I'VE SAID IT BEFORE: COPYING IS THE IMPORTANT PART. WHAT I'M TELLING YOU IS THE RESULT OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE!


YOU ARTISTS ARE WAY TOO YOUNG TO HAVE A STYLE THAT ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE ANYTHING.
IF I SPEND MY TIME PREACHING TO YOU LIKE AN OLD MOTHER, IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!
SHORT AND CLEAR: COMICS ARE FOR KIDS. SO KEEP 'EM CLEAN, EH?
yawn


DON'T GO THINKING I'LL RETIRE ANYTIME SOON. I JUST MIGHT BE THE MANAGING EDITOR OF THIS HOUSE IN THE FUTURE.
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDER-STANDS COMICS, AFTER ALL


I'VE BEEN KNOCKING AROUND IN THE COMICS NEW WAVE FOR YEARS, AND I KNOW MY WAY NOW.
I'VE KEPT THIS PUBLISHING HOUSE AFLOAT. IF I LEFT, THERE'D BE NO ONE LEFT WHO UNDERSTOOD COMICS.
I'm the greatest.

WHERE'D HE--

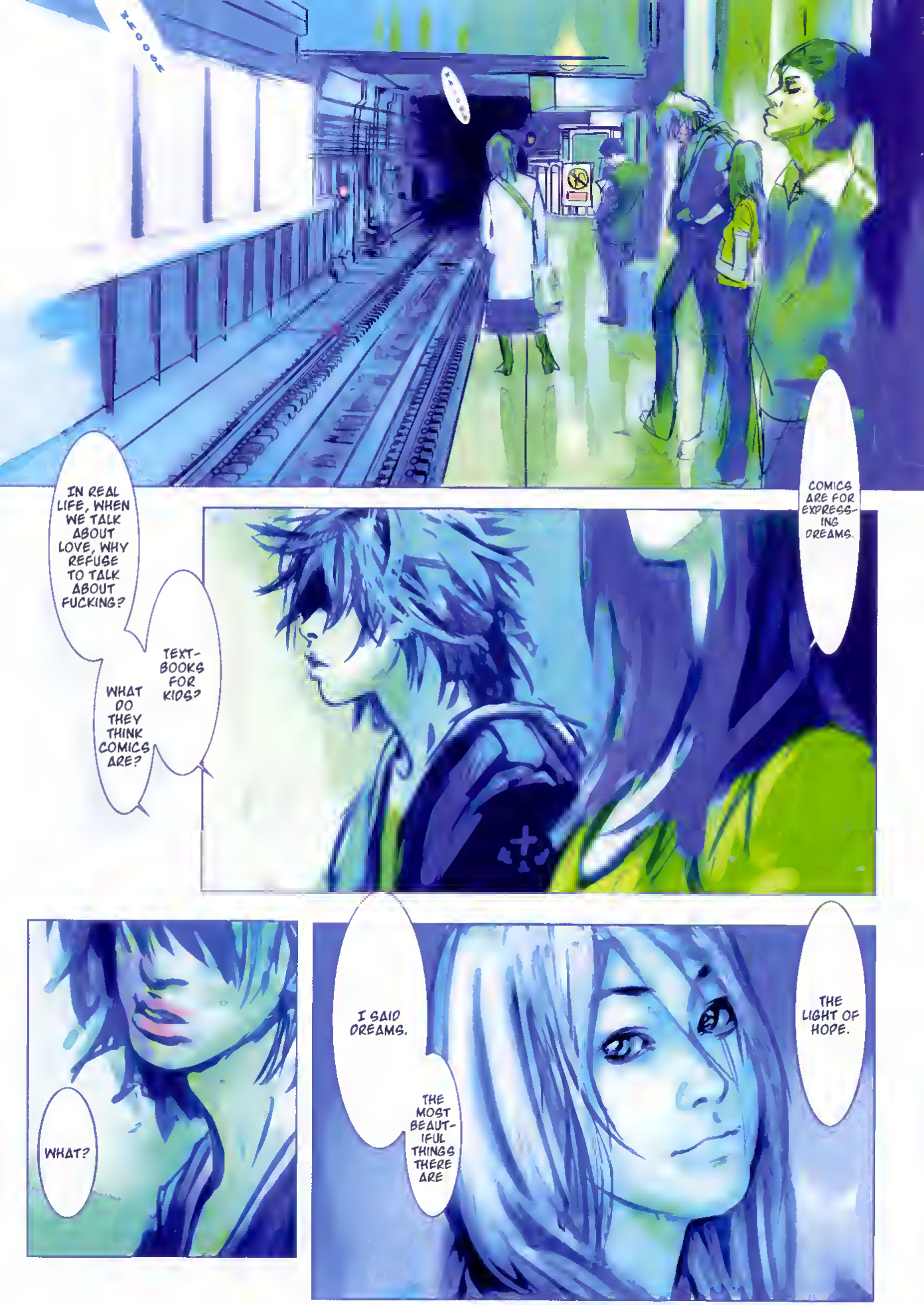
HE'S GONE

I FEEL LIKE I'VE SEEN HIM SOME-WHERE BEFORE...
BUT WHERE?

THEY LIVE OFF THE STATE AND GIVE LIP SERVICE TO LOVING COMICS
JUST CHECK OUT THE CRAP THEY PUBLISH!
ka-rack! clack!
ka-rack! clack!
WE'RE COMIC ARTISTS.
IF WE DON'T PLAY BY THE PUBLISHERS' RULES, HOW'LL WE EVER GET A BOOK OUT?
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, CRITICIZING THEM?
WHO'S THE GIRL OVER THERE?
SHE SURE DID SOME GREAT BOOKS! SHE'S WORTH STEALING FROM YOU!

HIS NEW LITTLE FAN?
SHE'S NOT BAD
SIGH... IF ONLY DOING COMICS GOT ME GIRLS LIKE THAT!
D'OH!
WAIT'LL I GET PUBLISHED! EVERY GIRL I DO'LL BE HOTTER THAN HER!
smile
ka-rack! clack!
klack
klack

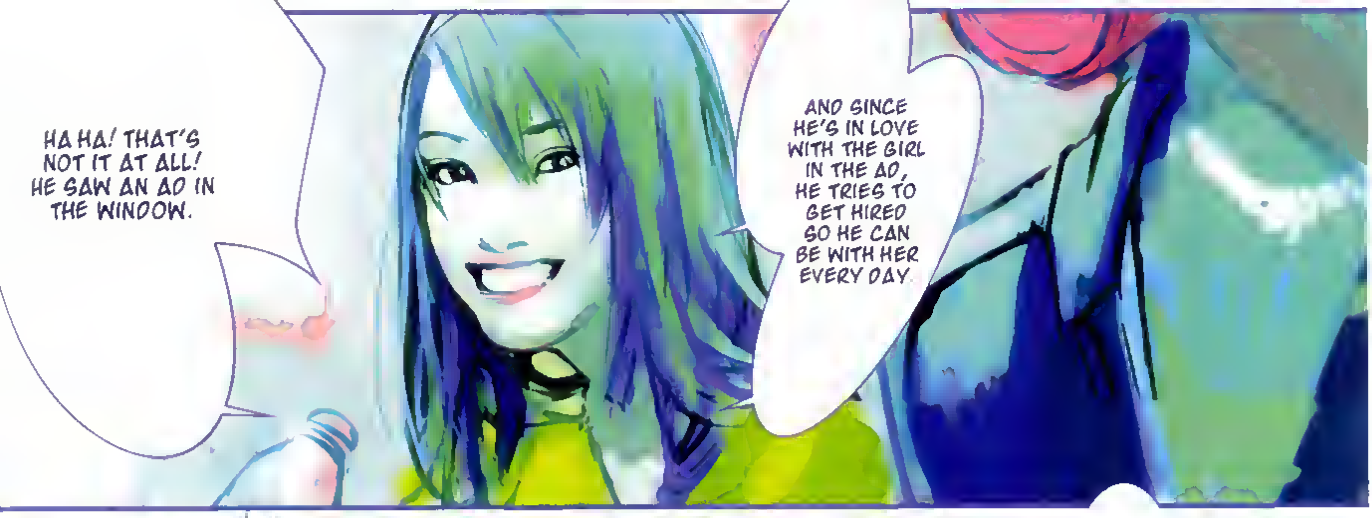
BEAT IT!
THOSE GUYS ARE MORONS.
HEY SIS, SO GLAD YOU CAME OUT TO PLAY!
UGH ...
OW! OWW! THAT HURT! MY WHEELS!


IN REAL LIFE, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT LOVE, WHY REFUSE TO TALK ABOUT FUCKING?
WHAT DO THEY THINK COMICS ARE?
TEXT-BOOKS FOR KIDS?
COMICS ARE FOR EXPRESS-ING DREAMS.
WHAT?
I SAID DREAMS.
THE MOST BEAUT-IFUL THINGS THERE ARE
THE LIGHT OF HOPE.

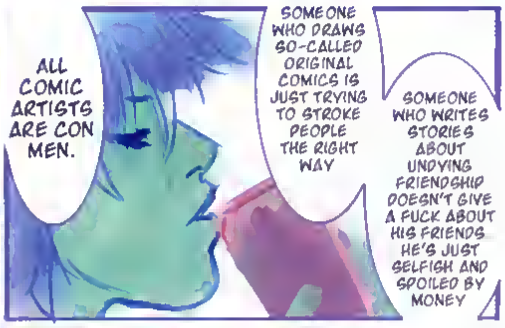
WHEN YOU READ THEM YOU CAN SEE THE BEAUTY OF PARADISE
HAPPINESS IS WITHIN REACH
YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE AND THE WORLD
AS IF YOU WERE HIGH UP
嘟
嘟
WHAT? HIGH?
boom boom
HEY! WATCH OUT!
嘟
HIGH UP, LIKE FLYING!

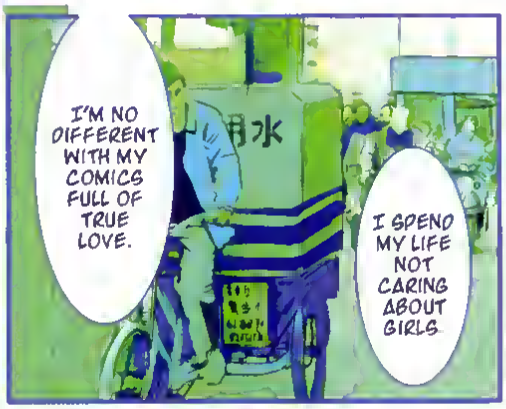
SEE?
IN A COMIC BOOK WORLD
FLYING
SOAR-ING
THE INTIMATE EXPERIENCE OF FLIGHT
AND MELTING AWAY, LIKE A SUGAR CUBE...
...IN COFFEE OF YOUR OWN MAKING.

ARE YOU CRAZY? WATCH IT!
1
I HAVE A STORY JUST LIKE THAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO.
A GUY SPENDS A DAY IN FRONT OF A CAFÉ. HE GOES IN, HOPING FOR A JOB.
'CAUSE THERE'S A HOT CHICK HE WANTS TO HIT ON INSIDE.
WHY DOES HE BOTHER ALL OF A SUDDEN?
Aaaaa
I'M WARNING YOU, IF YOU START UP WITH YOUR BULLSHIT AGAIN LIKE EARLIER, I WON'T HOLD ONTO YOU THIS TIME.
OR IF HE'S GAY, THERE'S A GUY HE LIKES.


HA HA! THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL! HE SAW AN AO IN THE WINDOW.
AND SINCE HE'S IN LOVE WITH THE GIRL IN THE AO, HE TRIES TO GET HIRED SO HE CAN BE WITH HER EVERY DAY.

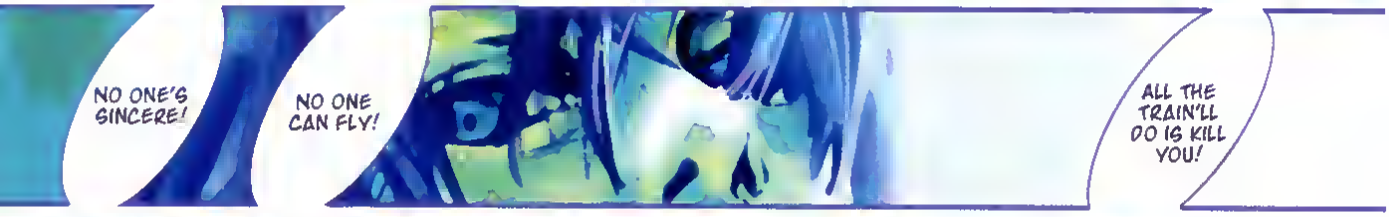
HMPH
IS THAT YOUR COMIC? YOUR DREAM?
THE REAL WORLD ISN'T LIKE THAT. GUYS AREN'T EITHER
WHAT YOU DRAW IS JUST A DISHONEST DREAM.

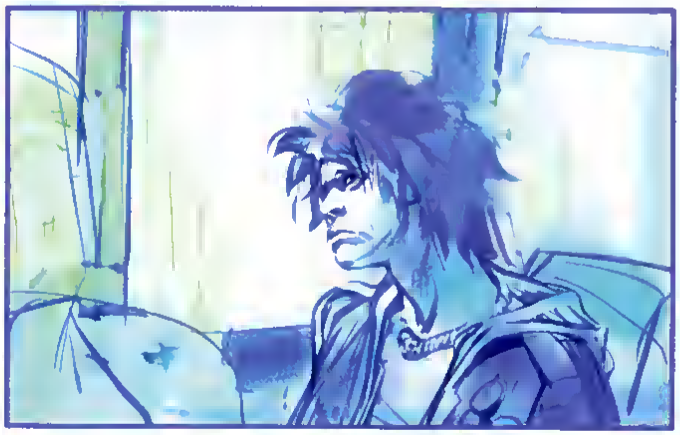

ALL COMIC ARTISTS ARE CON MEN.
SOMEONE WHO DRAWS SO-CALLED ORIGINAL COMICS IS JUST TRYING TO STROKE PEOPLE THE RIGHT WAY
SOMEONE WHO WRITES STORIES ABOUT UNDYING FRIENDSHIP DOESN'T GIVE A FUCK ABOUT HIS FRIENDS HE'S JUST SELFISH AND SPOILED BY MONEY


I'M NO DIFFERENT WITH MY COMICS FULL OF TRUE LOVE.
I SPEND MY LIFE NOT CARING ABOUT GIRLS

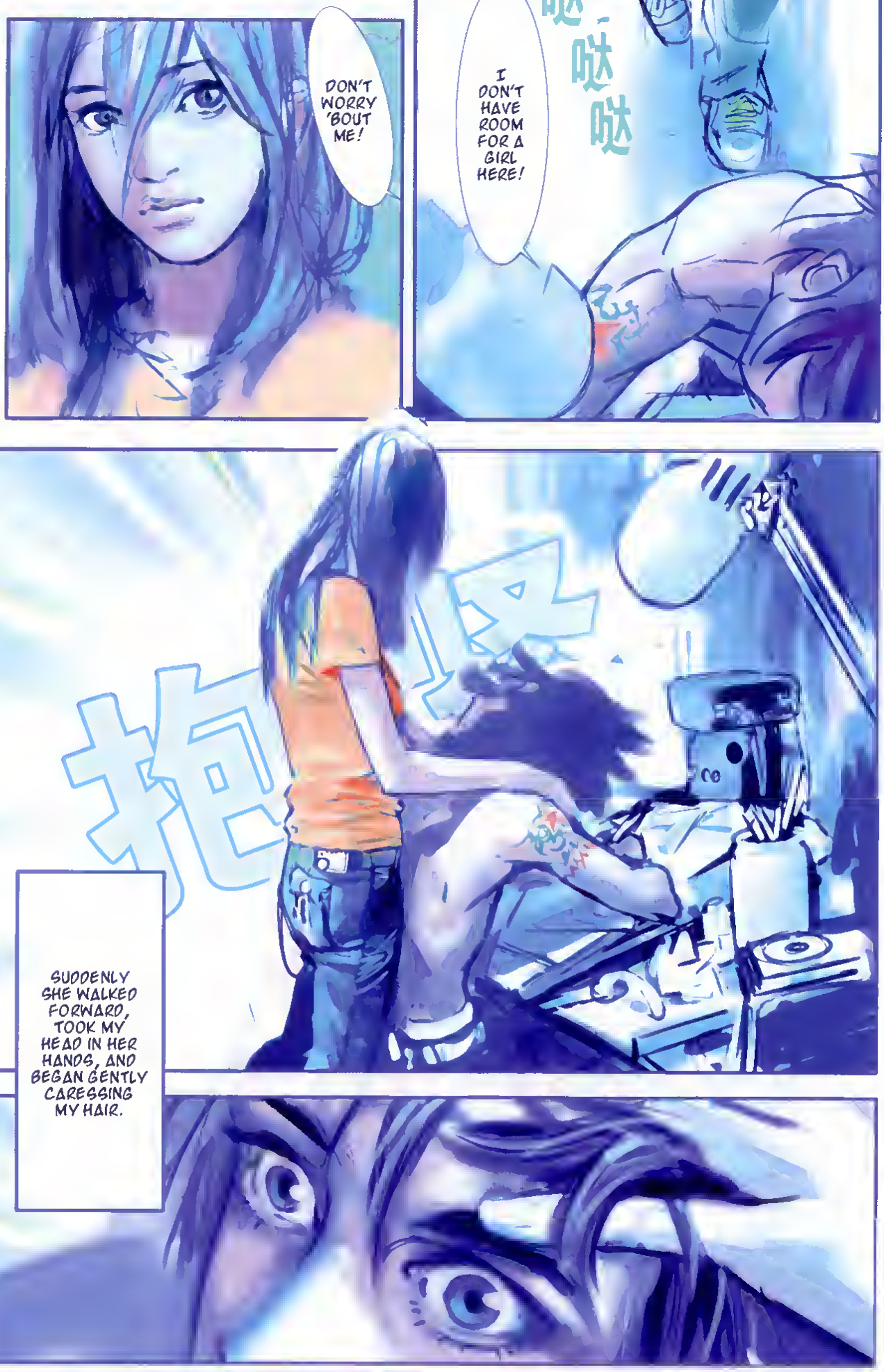
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? THAT YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ME?

PEOPLE JUST DO WHAT THEY DO TO GET PUBLISHED!
GET IT? JUST LIKE IN YOUR COMICS!
FROM CREATOR TO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, THEY ALL KNOW THEY'RE ONLY LIARS


NO ONE'S SINCERE!
NO ONE CAN FLY!
ALL THE TRAIN'LL DO IS KILL YOU!



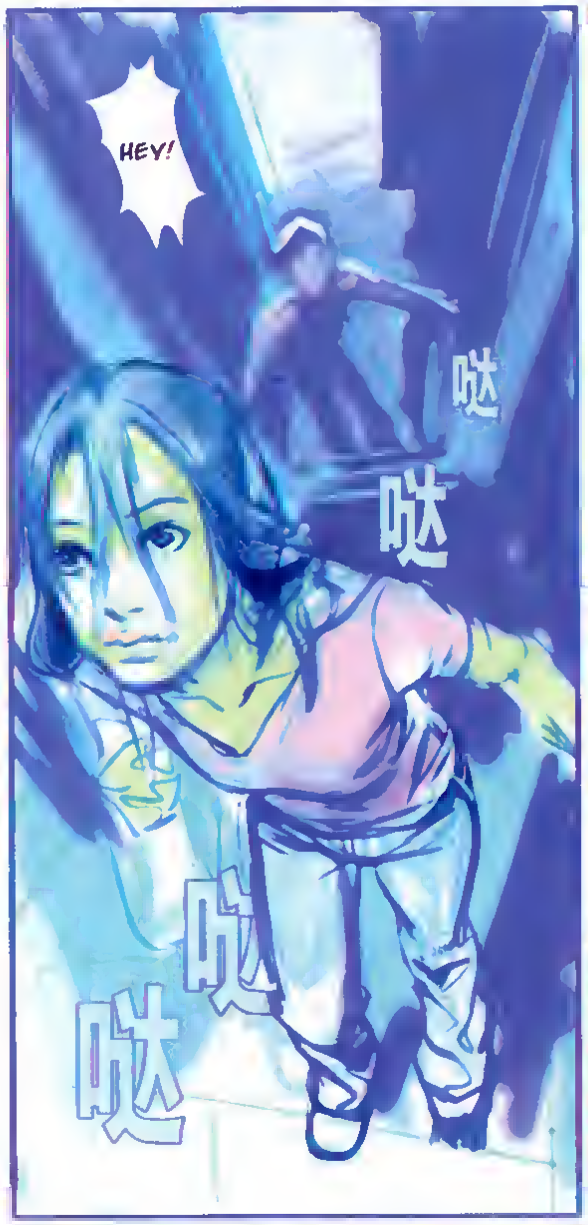
splish splash
splish splash
splish
splish
splish
splish
DID YOU ARGUE WITH YOUR MOTHER AGAIN?
IF YOU CAN'T EVEN HOLD A JOB, WHAT KIND OF COMIC WILL YOU MAKE?
DRAWING THOSE SILLY, STARRY-EYED, EMPTY-HEADED STORIES!
LIFE ISN'T A COMIC!
A GROWN-UP GIRL LIKE YOU STILL PLAYING THE REBEL!
GO SLEEP AT MY FRIEND'S PLACE
HE ALWAYS TAKES GOOD CARE OF GIRLS

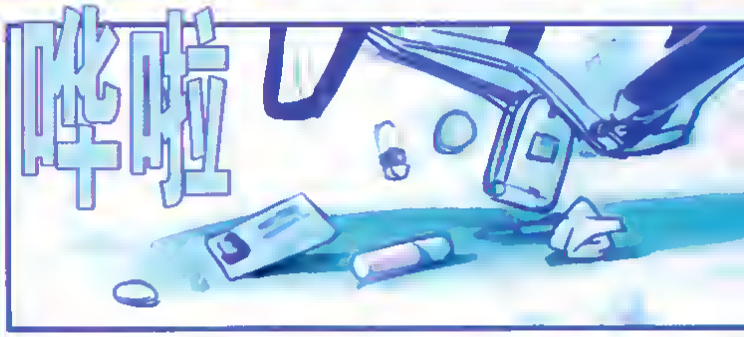

DON'T WORRY 'BOUT ME!
I DON'T HAVE ROOM FOR A GIRL HERE!
啦啦啦
抱
SUDDENLY SHE WALKED FORWARD, TOOK MY HEAD IN HER HANDS, AND BEGAN GENTLY CARESSING MY HAIR.

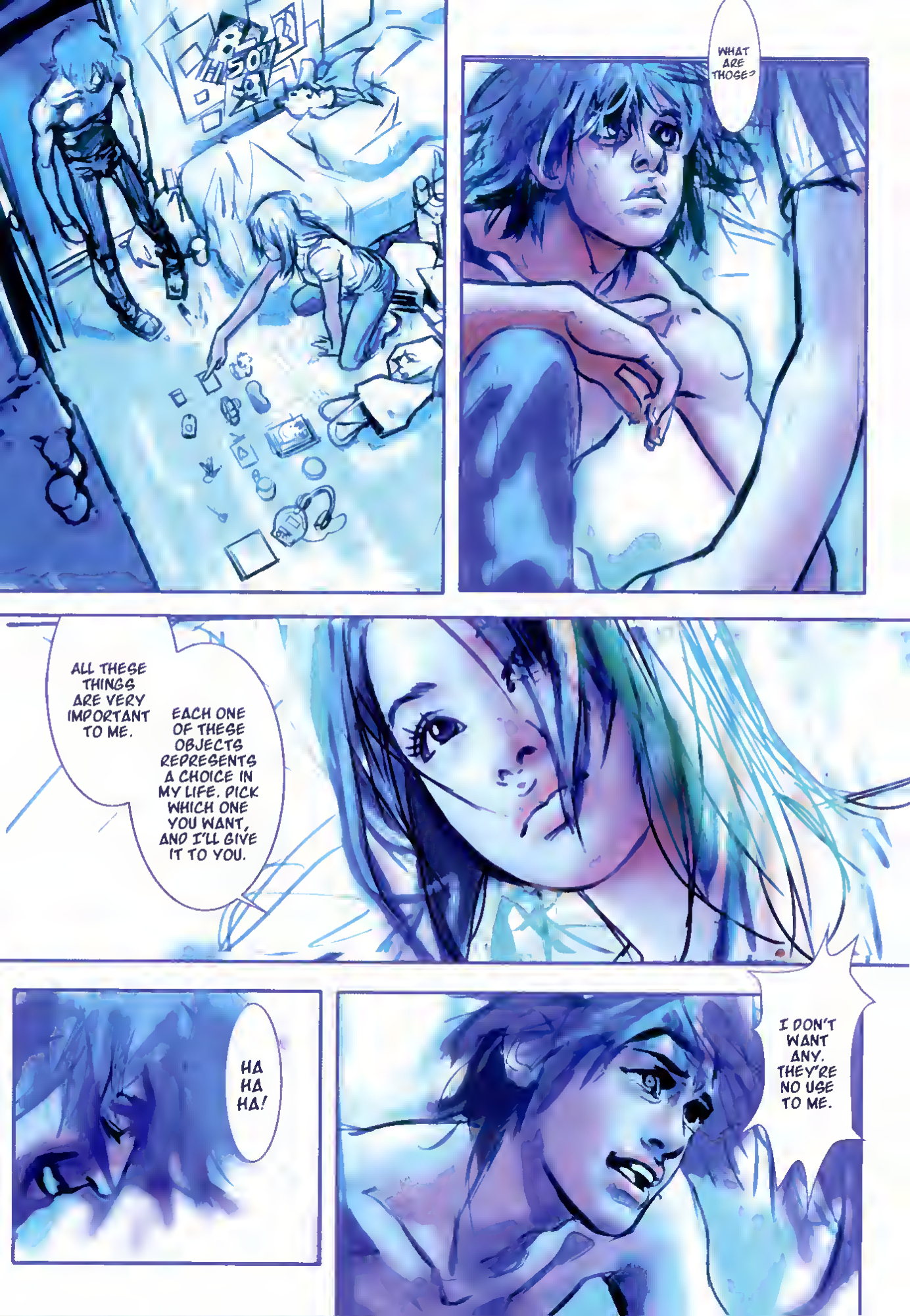
IN GREAT SURPRISE, I STRUGGLED TO PRETEND TO WORK.
NOT A WORD, JUST KEPT DRAWING AS IF I DIDN'T FEEL HER LOVE
drip
I FELT DROPS OF BURNING LIQUID FALL ON MY NECK; SHE WAS CRYING SILENTLY BEHIND ME.
I ALREADY PHONED MY FRIEND!
LEAVE NOW! GO!

WHAT?
IT'S MIDNIGHT AND SHE'S NOT THERE YET?
I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW IRRESPONSIBLE SHE IS FOR HER AGE.
WAIT--
SOMEONE'S AT THE DOOR
咚 咚
咚 咚
I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE!

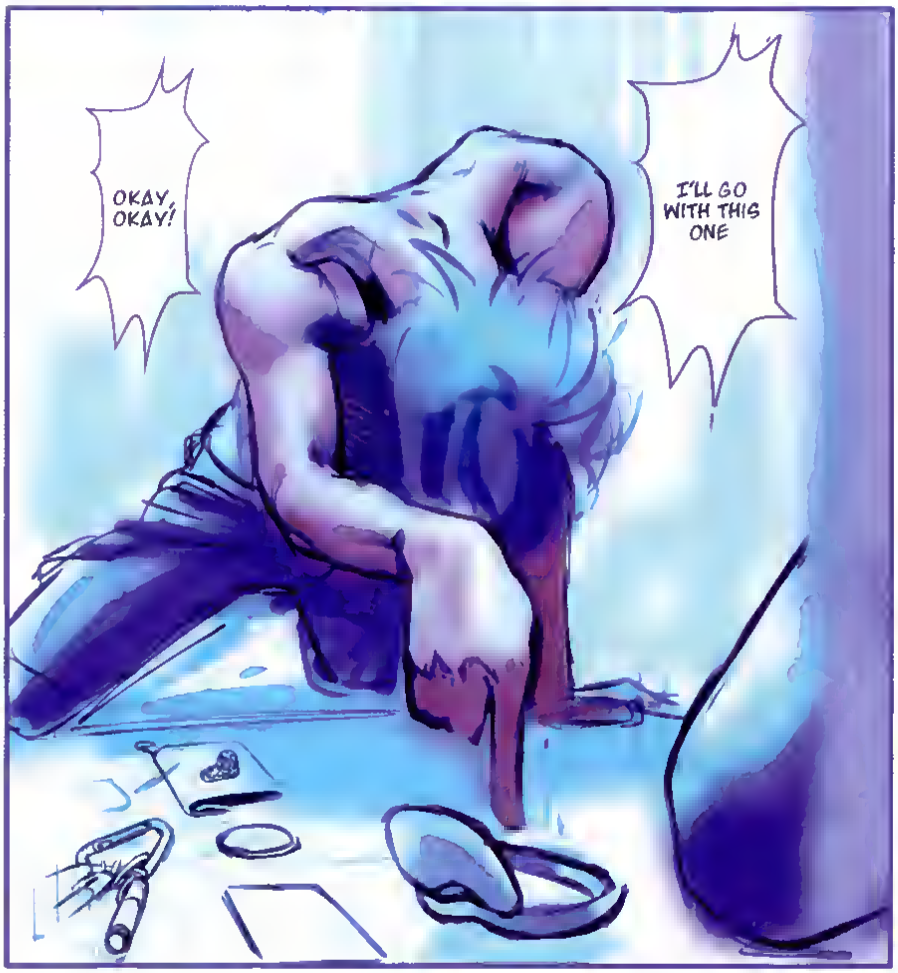
whap
YOU! YOU STOOD MY FRIEND UP TONIGHT!


HEY!
哒
哒
哒
哒

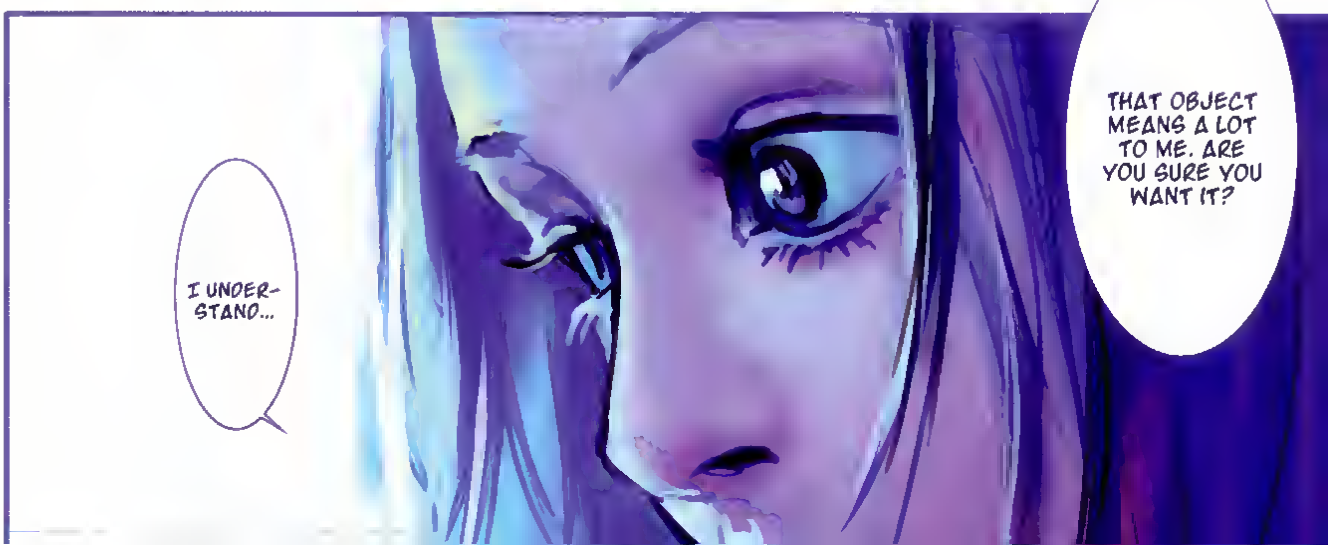

哗啦


WHAT ARE THOSE?
ALL THESE THINGS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO ME.
EACH ONE OF THESE OBJECTS REPRESENTS A CHOICE IN MY LIFE. PICK WHICH ONE YOU WANT, AND I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU.
HA HA HA!
I DON'T WANT ANY. THEY'RE NO USE TO ME.

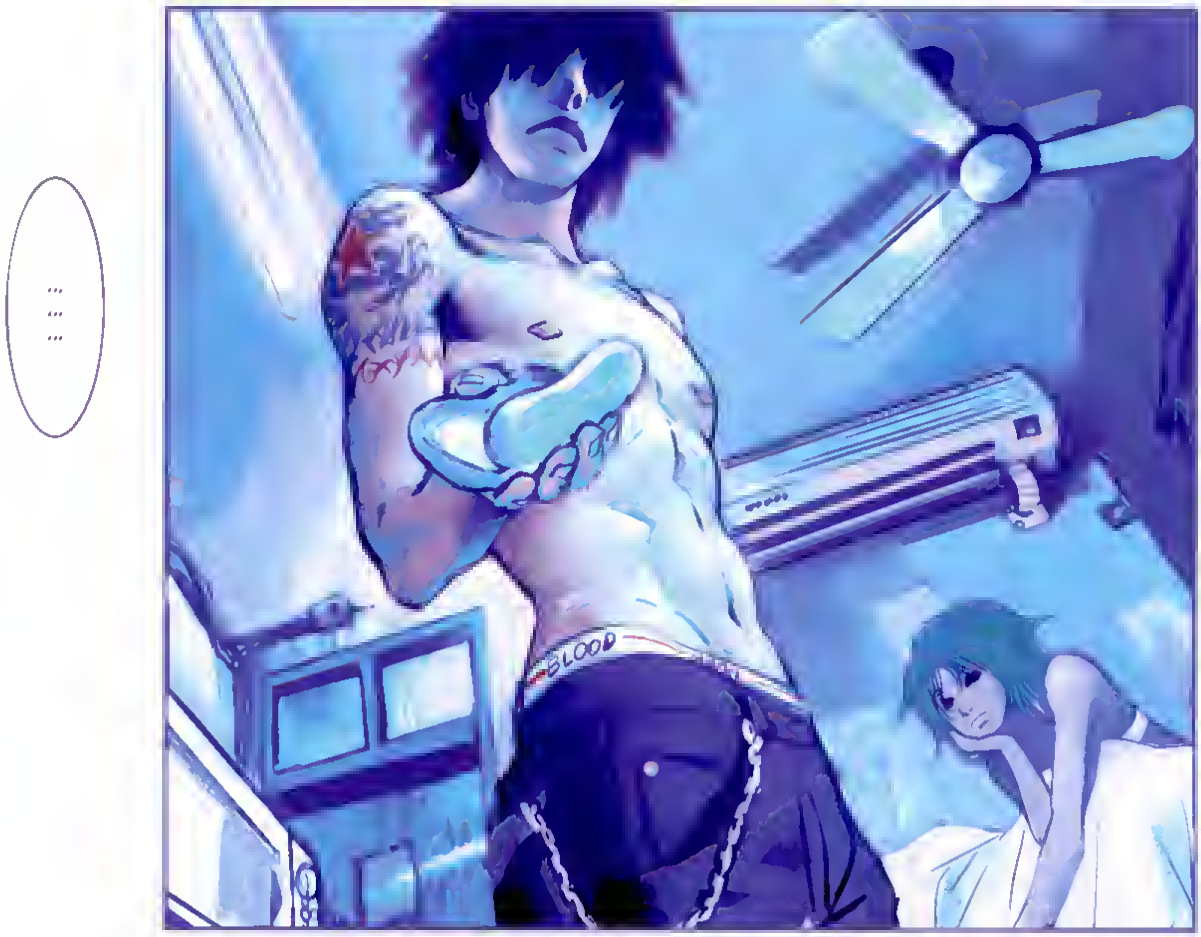
CHOOSE CAREFULLY.
THE ONE YOU CHOOSE WILL ALSO FORCE ME TO MAKE A CHOICE.


OKAY, OKAY!
I'LL GO WITH THIS ONE

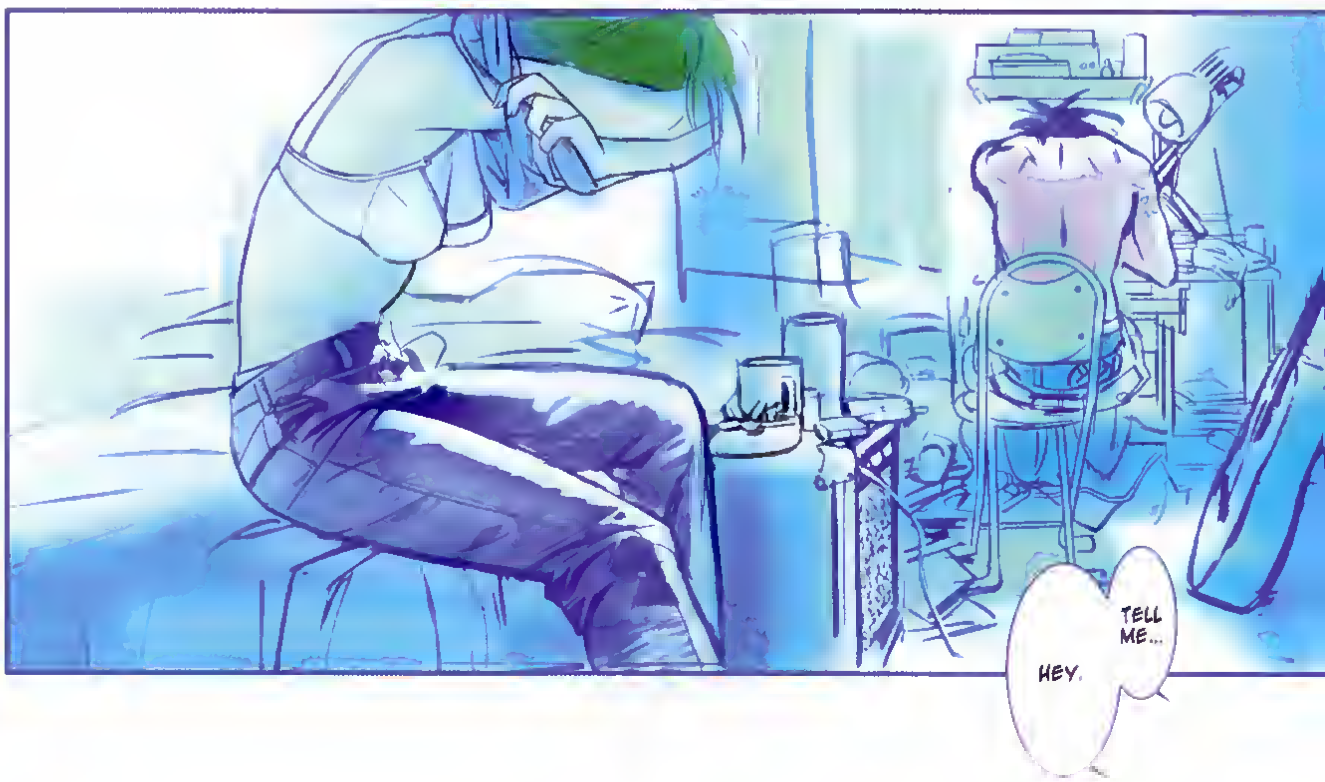
UP CLOSE, IT SEEMED THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO HER.

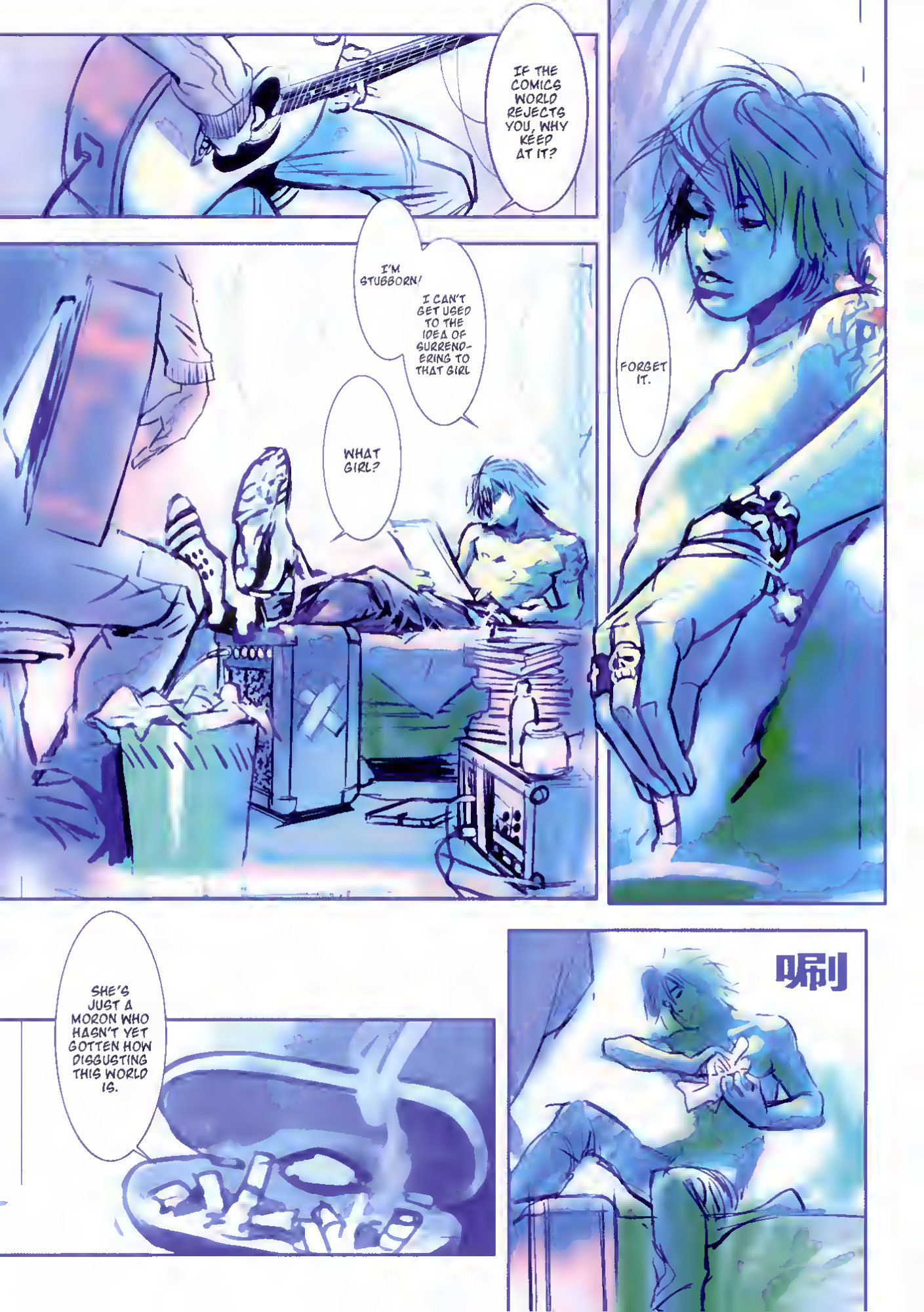

I UNDER-STAND...
THAT OBJECT MEANS A LOT TO ME. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT IT?

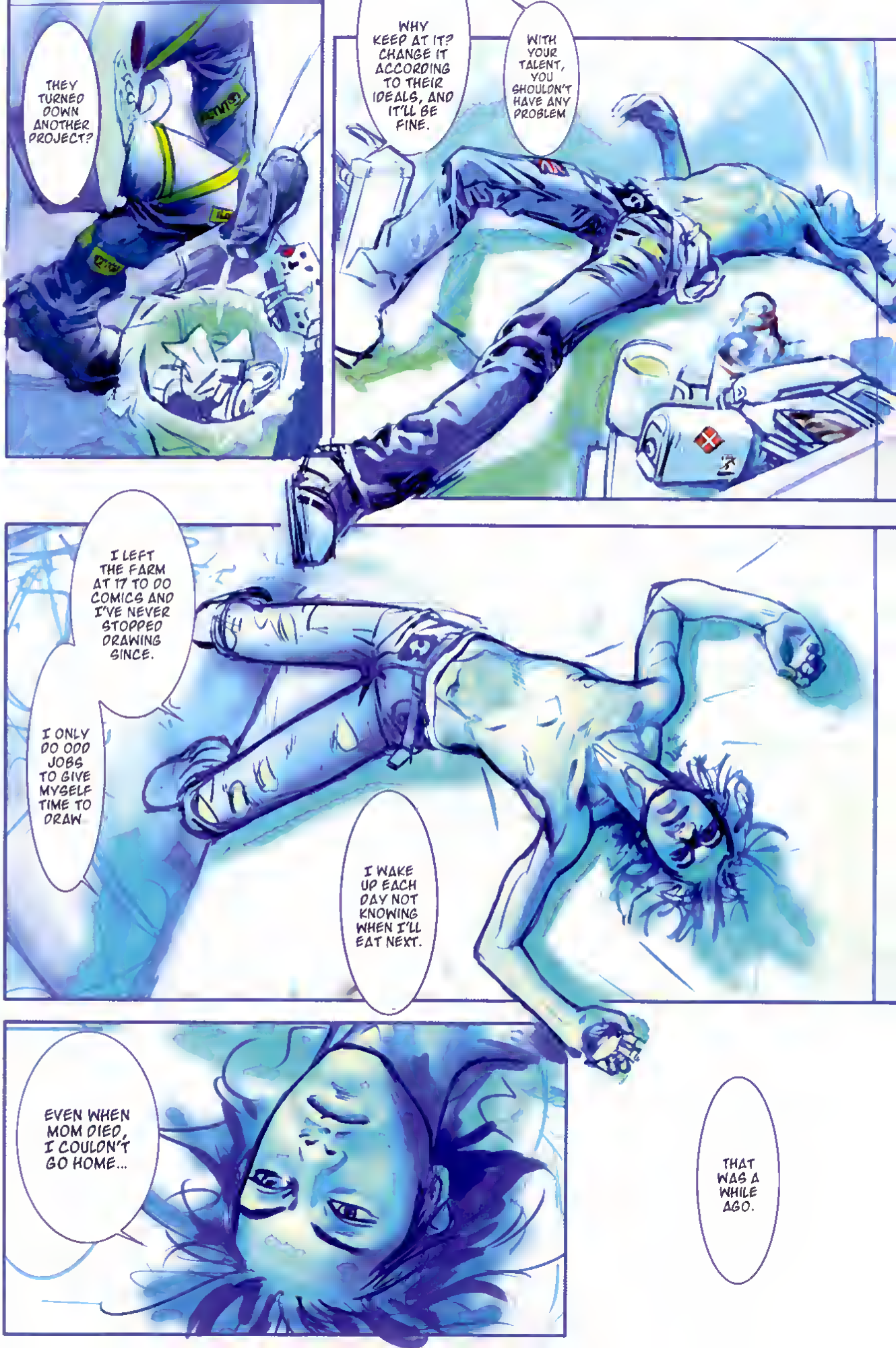
NO, NO! I'LL PICK ANOTHER ONE!
Shhh!
HA HA!
IS IT ALWAYS THIS MUCH OF A PARTY AT YOUR PLACE?



SHE DIDN'T COME BACK FOR A LONG TIME AFTER THAT. LATER I HEARD HER MOM'D BEGGED A LONG-TERM LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR HER, AND SHE'D SINCE DEVELOPED SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESS.




IF THE COMICS WORLD REJECTS YOU, WHY KEEP AT IT?
I'M STUBBORN!
I CAN'T GET USED TO THE IDEA OF SURRENDERING TO THAT GIRL
WHAT GIRL?
FORGET IT.
SHE'S JUST A MORON WHO HASN'T YET GOTTEN HOW DISGUSTING THIS WORLD IS.
唰刂


THEY TURNED DOWN ANOTHER PROJECT?
WHY KEEP AT IT? CHANGE IT ACCORDING TO THEIR IDEALS, AND IT'LL BE FINE.
WITH YOUR TALENT, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY PROBLEM
I LEFT THE FARM AT 17 TO DO COMICS AND I'VE NEVER STOPPED DRAWING SINCE.
I ONLY DO ODD JOBS TO GIVE MYSELF TIME TO DRAW
I WAKE UP EACH DAY NOT KNOWING WHEN I'LL EAT NEXT.
EVEN WHEN MOM DIED, I COULDN'T GO HOME...
THAT WAS A WHILE AGO.

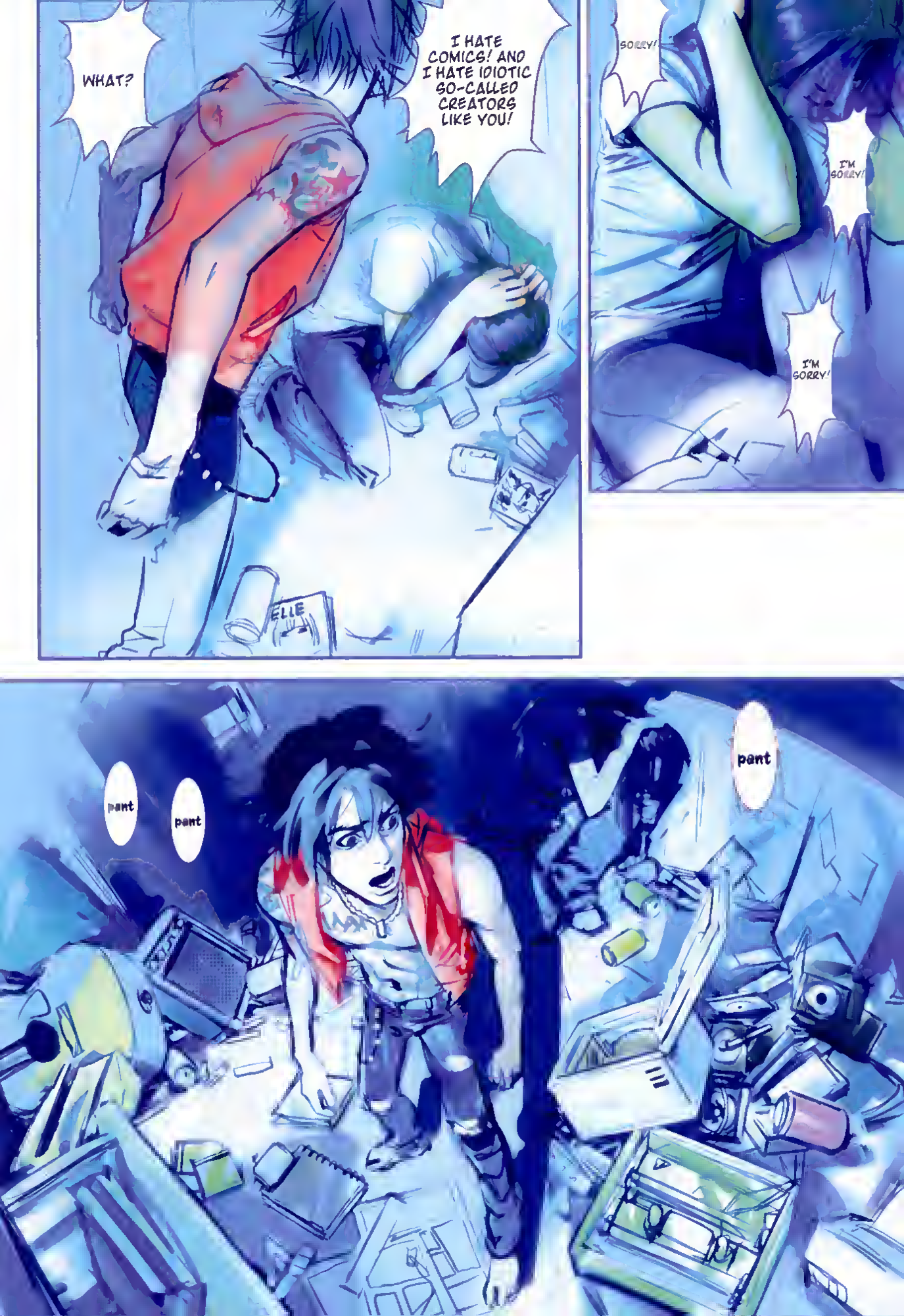
OUR COMICS REALLY ARE MADE FOR LYING TO KIDS?
YOU THINK...
...I COULD JUST LET THEM USE MY WORK TO FOOL KIDS?
OUCH!
I JUST FOUND A GOOD JOB AS AN EDITOR.
I'M GONNA ASK THE HIGHER-UPS TO PUBLISH ME.
bzz bzz
bzz bzz
WHO IS IT?
SHIT! I FELL ASLEEP.

CLICK
THERE YOU ARE! I THOUGHT YOU'D DISAPPEARED.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE
I BROUGHT PENCILS AND ERASERS.
ANYTHING LEFT TO EAT IN YOUR FRIDGE?
DID YOU READ MY SCRIPT?
I SWEAR LAST TIME I ALMOST LOST IT WITH THAT OLD FART WHO RUNS THE PRESS
I DON'T WANT TO KNOW IF THE OTHERS LIKE IT OR NOT WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR A LONG TIME.
SO WHAT DO YOU EDITORS SAY?
CHANGE IT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, CHANGE IT? YOU'RE THE ONES WHO SHOULD CHANGE!

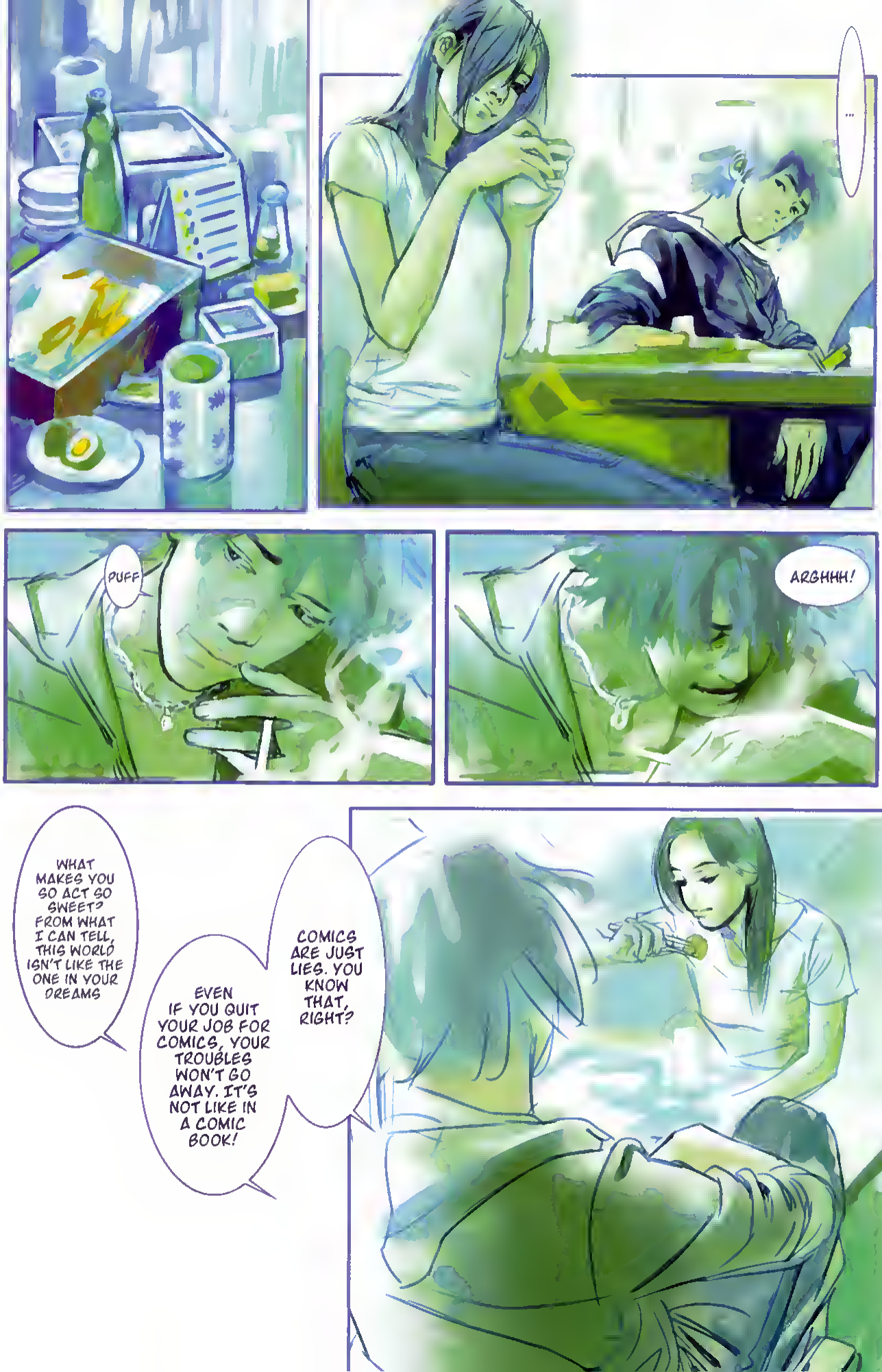
HEY! DON'T TOUCH THE STUFF ON THE TABLE!
...
YOU ARE SO--

HUH?
HEY...
...
...
HOW COULD YOU HAVE CHANGED SO MUCH SINCE BECOMING AN EDITOR?
WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU SAYING?
DON'T YOU TRY AND LECTURE ME!
WHAT, ME ANGRY? WHO'S ANGRY? I CAN DRAW BETTER THAN ANY OF YOU! WOULD YOU STILL BE A PATHETIC EDITOR IF YOU DREW BETTER THAN ME?
I WAS BORN DRAWING BETTER THAN ANY OF YOU! WAIT... I'M THE NARROW-MINDED ONE?

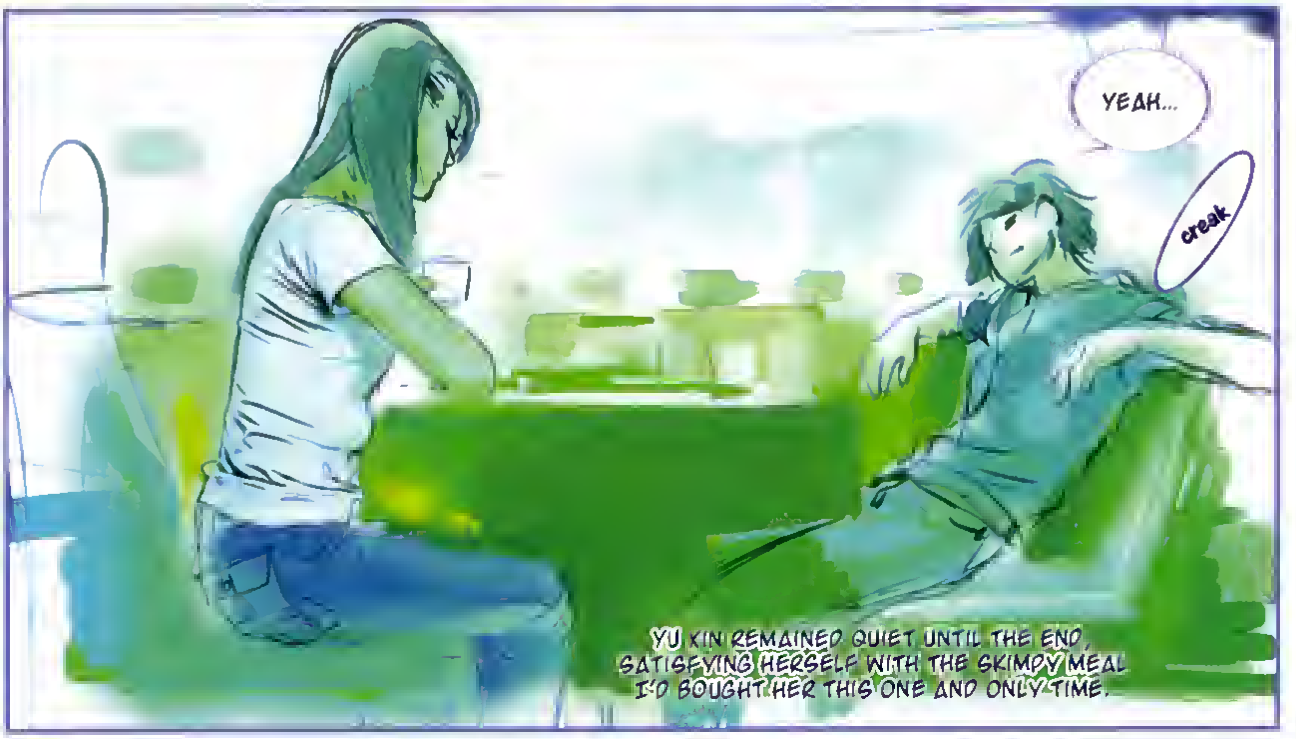
哗啦
AAAAH!
哗啦


WHAT?
I HATE COMICS! AND I HATE IDIOTIC SO-CALLED CREATORS LIKE YOU!
ELLE
SORRY!
I'M SORRY!
I'M SORRY!
pant
pant
pant

pant
...
IT WASN'T DIRECTED AT YOU. THEY JUST PISSED ME OFF SO MUCH.
I'M SORRY.
I'LL BUY DINNER.


...
PUFF
ARGHHH!
WHAT MAKES YOU SO ACT SO SWEET? FROM WHAT I CAN TELL, THIS WORLD ISN'T LIKE THE ONE IN YOUR DREAMS
EVEN IF YOU QUIT YOUR JOB FOR COMICS, YOUR TROUBLES WON'T GO AWAY. IT'S NOT LIKE IN A COMIC BOOK!
COMICS ARE JUST LIES. YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?

LET ME SAY IT RIGHT NOW.
OF EVERYONE I KNOW, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO'S LIKE A COMIC BOOK HEROINE.
I REMEMBER I TALKED A LOT THAT DAY, CRAZY TALK. A GUSH OF WORDS OOZING MEANNESS POURED OUT OF ME.


YEAH...
creak
YU KIN REMAINED QUIET UNTIL THE END, SATISFYING HERSELF WITH THE SKIMPY MEAL I'D BOUGHT HER THIS ONE AND ONLY TIME.

BYE.

PLEASE STAND BACK. THE BUS IS ARRIVING.
NEXT STOP...
LINE 107 TO...
ding ding
107

WE DIDN'T SAY A WORD IN THE BUS. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS THINKING, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO.

DAMMIT! IT'S RAINING!
whap
HEY! WHERE'RE YOU GOING?

STOP!
HEY! WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU?
slap slap

YOUR T-SHIRT!
DON'T YOU WANT IT?
啪
AAAH!
哗啦啦
HEY! YOUR WALLET! YOUR ID!
WHAT ARE YOU, NUTS?

pisch
pisch
pisch
YOU LITTLE PUNK! WATCHING WHERE YOU'RE GOING! CHASING GIRLS IN FRONT OF EVERYONE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY!
DON'T RUN SO FAST!
splash splash splash
京E 49530

STOP!

SUDDENLY THE RAIN STOPPED,
LETTING THE SUN THROUGH.

突突突突

pant
pant
pant
WHAT GOT INTO YOU?
WELL? WHAT?
DID YOU JUST SNAP OR SOME-THING?
突突突突突突

LOOKING AT HER WAITING, JUST WAITING FOR ME TO WALK TOWARD HER...
drop
drip
drip
...I WAS FILLED WITH DISGUST.
Hmpf
WHAT NOW?!
YOU

YOU GET SO MANY GIRLS--
WHY--
WHY WON'T YOU TAKE ME?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
I CAN'T LET YOUR NAIVE DREAMS COME TRUE!
WHY? 'CAUSE IT'S SO MUCH BETTER THIS WAY?
THIS WAY LIFE'S LIKE YOUR COMICS!
YOU'RE ALWAYS THE HERO. COWARD!
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A COWARD!
gasp
ALL YOU DO IS MAKE OTHER PEOPLE PUT UP WITH YOU.
gasp
YOU ASK A LOT OF THEM WITHOUT EVER GIVING ANYTHING BACK.
YOU WAIT AROUND WITH YOUR HANDS IN YOUR POCKETS FOR SOMEONE TO COME SAVE YOU.
FOR THEM TO CHANGE FOR YOU.
gasp
gasp

NOTHING'LL CHANGE THAT WAY, BELIEVE ME.
IN THIS WORLD...
...YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE YOU CAN CHANGE.
pitter
patter
pitter
patter
pitter
patter
patter
pitter
patter
patter
pitter

4.5m

YEAH, I'M JUST ONE OF HER FRIENDS.
NOTHING IMPORTANT. SHE LEFT HER UMBRELLA AT MY PLACE. TELL HER TO DROP BY.

啪
...
AACHOO!
彭

ding a ling
ding a ling
ding a ling
啪
JUST GET OFF WORK?
YEAH
咚咚咚

WHAT THE--?
OWW!
clang

HA HA!
SUR-PRISE!
DAMN. THIS PLACE IS A STY.
DIDN'T IT USED TO BE CLEAN? DID THIEVES COME THROUGH OR WHAT?
WHAT-EVER.
THIS PLACE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MESS.

ding a ling
ding a ling
ding a ling
ding a ling
ding a ling
MAN, MY HEAD HURTS!
WHUH --?
HEY, IT'S YOU AT LAST!
Oh right, your umbrella...
Tap Tap

SURE YOU DIDN'T FORGET ANY-THING?
I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS AGAIN
...
...
...

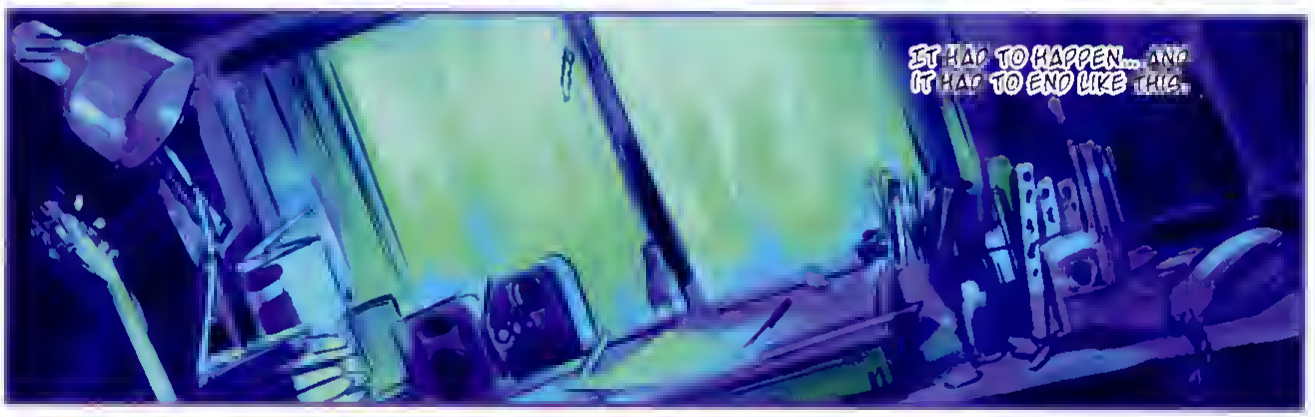
I'LL GO GET THE BIKE.
WAIT HERE.
FORGIVE ME...
..I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A BURDEN.
!!
I HOPE YOU HAVE A HAPPY LIFE.

啪

A SLIGHTLY SALTY FLAVOR FILLED MY MOUTH, AND I REALIZED SHE WAS CRYING.

WILL YOU STILL COME AND SEE ME?
I ALMOST LOST EVERY-THING.
I WAS CRAZY ABOUT YOU FOR A LONG TIME.
I HAVE TO START A NORMAL LIFE ALL OVER AGAIN.
4167
突突突突突

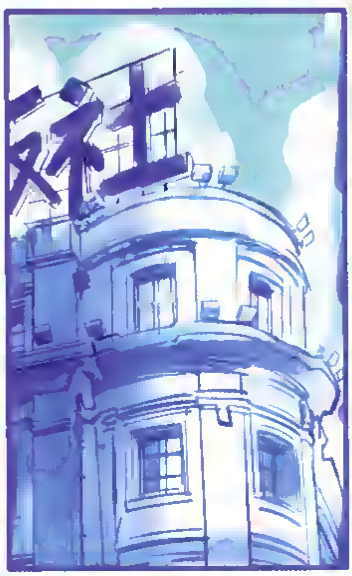
THE BANAL STORY OF A YOUNG GIRL IN LOVE WITH A COMIC CREATOR.


IT HAD TO HAPPEN... AND IT HAD TO END LIKE THIS.

THAT WAS HOW YU XIN LEFT US: ME AND COMICS. SHE WENT BACK TO A NORMAL LIFE.
BOLEINO

EVER SINCE THAT DAY, I KEEP MY ROOM JUST AS SHE LEFT IT.
WHEN NIGHT FALLS, I THINK I HEAR HER KNOCKING ON MY DOOR.
IN THE DULL PATTER OF THE RAIN, I TRY AND IMAGINE WHAT SHE'S DOING.

I CAN FEEL HER STANDING BEHIND ME, WARMING ME WITH A LOOK FULL OF LOVE, AS THOUGH SHE'D NEVER LEFT.
I THINK... ABOVE ALL, I CAN'T START CRYING.
WITH THE FIRST TEAR, SHE'LL DISAPPEAR FOREVER.
drip drop
drip drop


社

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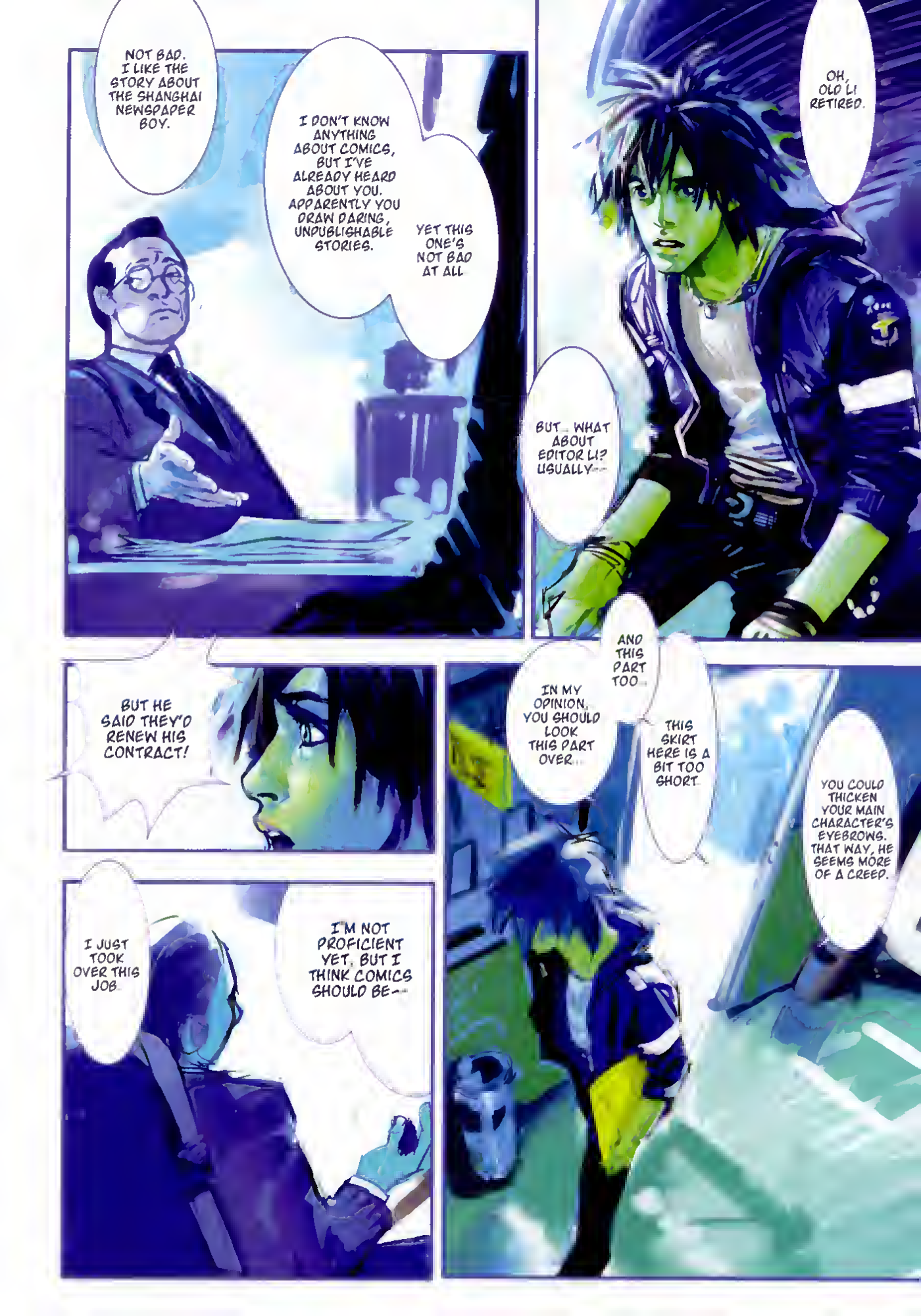
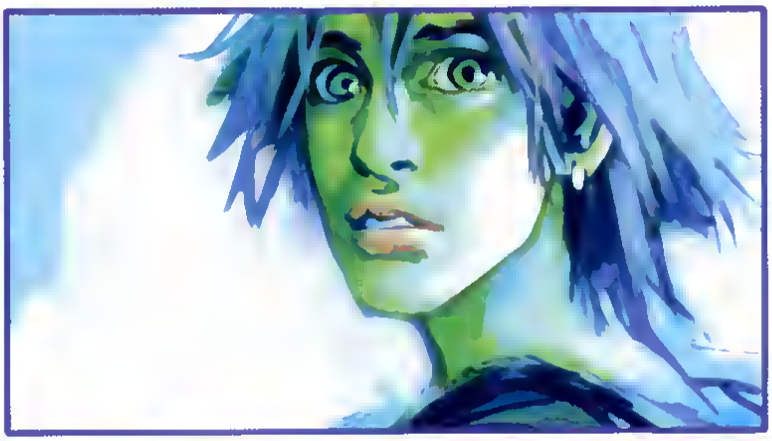
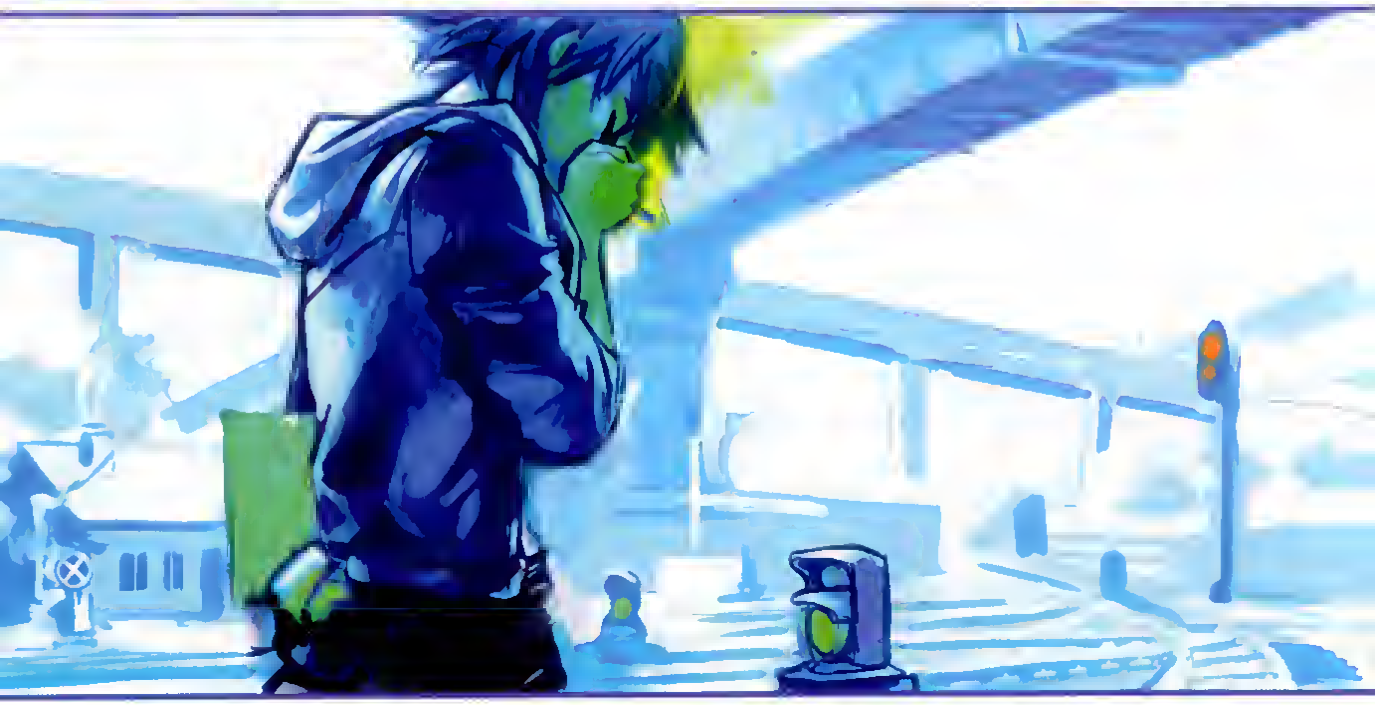

NOT BAD. I LIKE THE STORY ABOUT THE SHANGHAI NEWSPAPER BOY.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT COMICS, BUT I'VE ALREADY HEARD ABOUT YOU. APPARENTLY YOU DRAW DARING, UNPUBLISHABLE STORIES.
YET THIS ONE'S NOT BAD AT ALL
OH, OLD LI RETIRED.
BUT... WHAT ABOUT EDITOR LI? USUALLY--
BUT HE SAID THEY'D RENEW HIS CONTRACT!
I JUST TOOK OVER THIS JOB.
I'M NOT PROFICIENT YET, BUT I THINK COMICS SHOULD BE--
IN MY OPINION, YOU SHOULD LOOK THIS PART OVER...
AND THIS PART TOO...
THIS SKIRT HERE IS A BIT TOO SHORT.
YOU COULD THICKEN YOUR MAIN CHARACTER'S EYEBROWS. THAT WAY, HE SEEMS MORE OF A CREED.

HEY LI, YOU PEED ON YOUR PANTS!

OLD NUT!
TAKE AWAY HIS POWER AND HE'S NOTHING. CRUSHED.
TODAY'S THE DAY HE RETIRES.



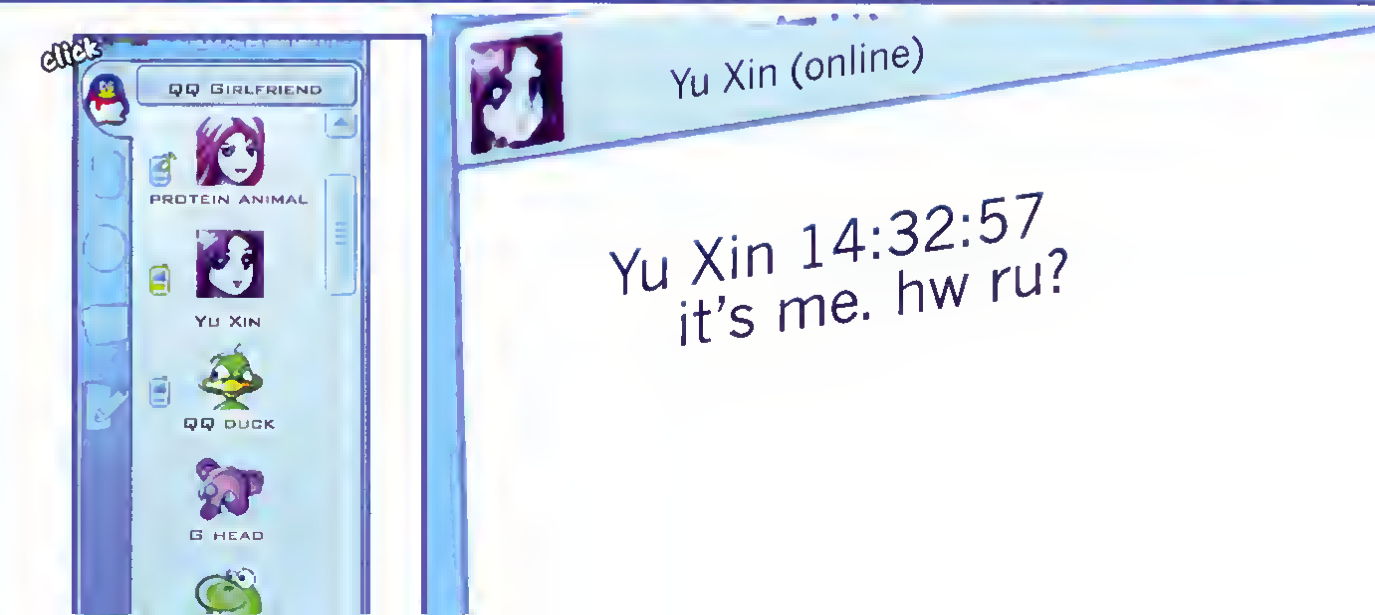


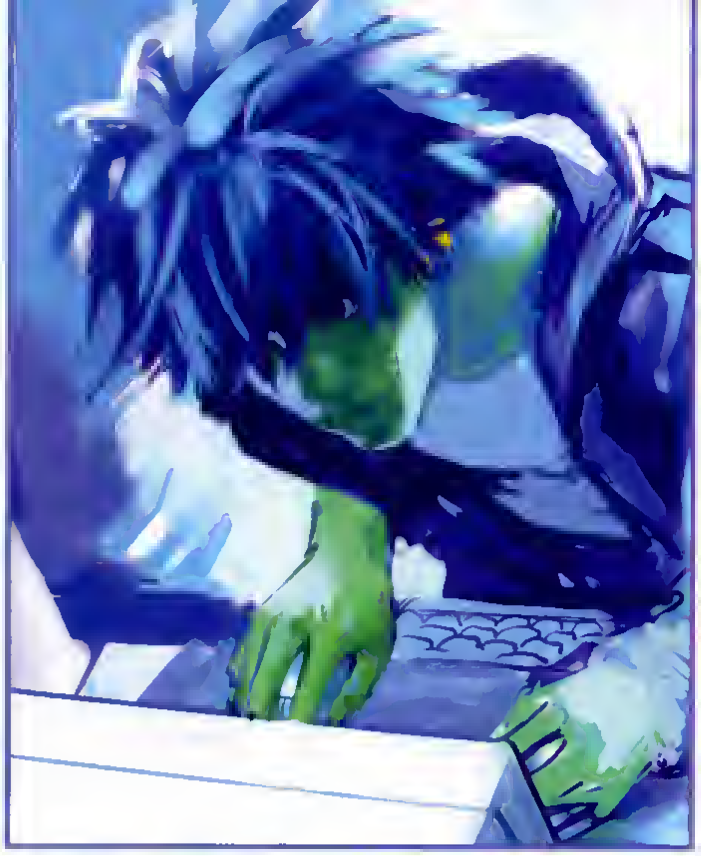
beep
beep
beep
beep

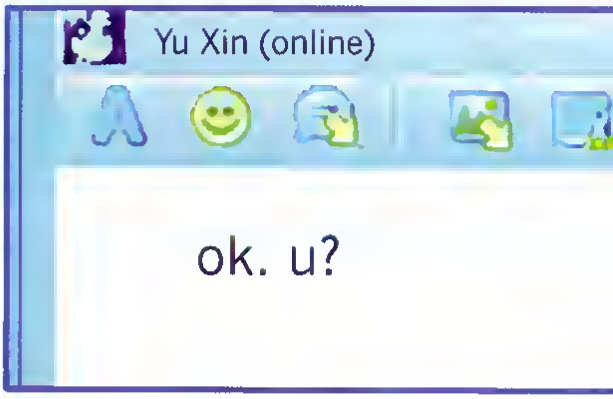
THE COMIC CON?
WHAT-EVER!
WHAT CHANCE?
I DON'T NEED ONE!
I'VE GOT SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT TO DO RIGHT NOW!
I WANT...
...TO FLY!

降下
降下
降下

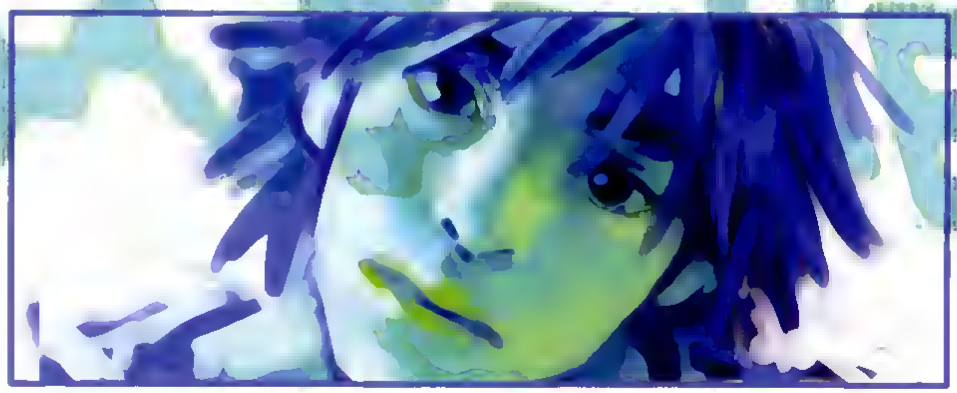
IO?
YOU HURT YOUR HAND
FALL DOWN?


click
QQ GIRLFRIEND
PROTEIN ANIMAL
YU XIN
QQ DUCK
G HEAD
Yu Xin (online)
Yu Xin 14:32:57
it's me. hw ru?



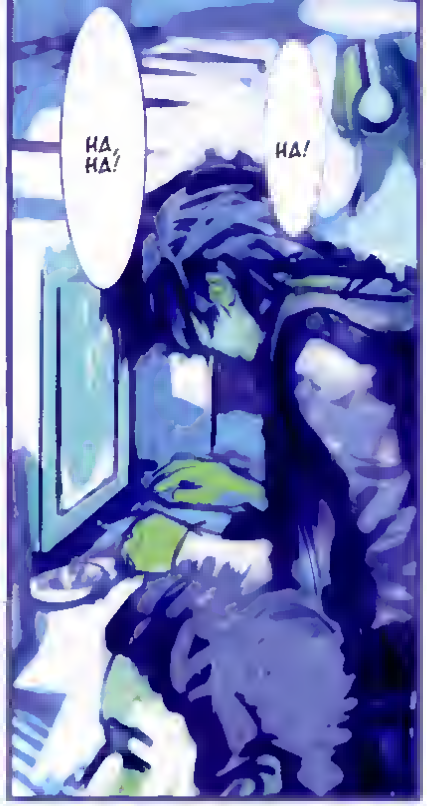


Yu Xin 2004-06-15 14:40:38
i got married.



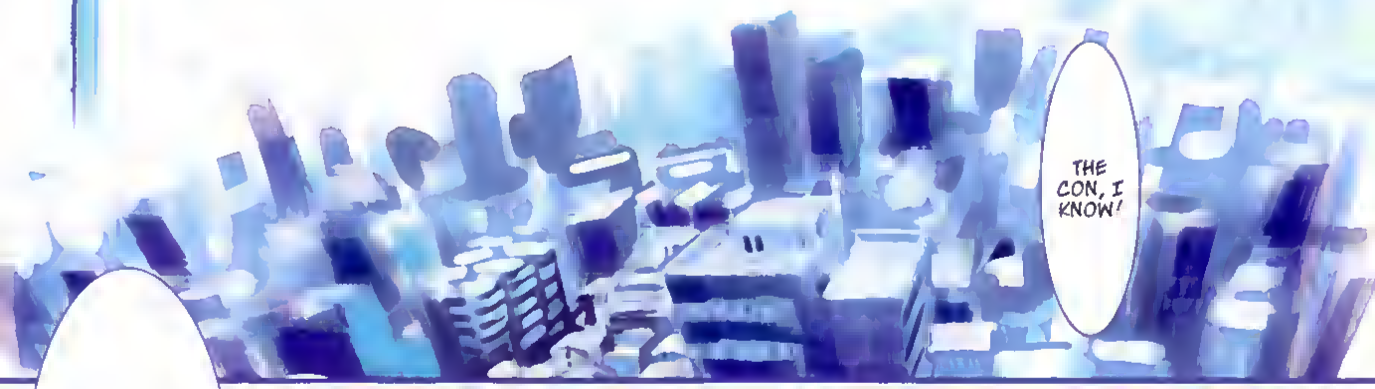
Ducon 14:42:55
ru hapi?
Yu Xin 14:43:44
all I needed 2 be hapi wz 2 leave a guy lyk u.

Ducon 14:45:17
did u quit 2 do comix agen?
Yu Xin 14:45:51
no, comix were impossible after U.



Yu Xin (online)

Yu Xin 2004-06-15 14:47:11
i saw ur comic 2day.



JUST SOMETHING TO AMUSE THE KIDS! IF I DON'T MAKE IT THERE, FEEL FREE TO CRITIQUE IT, AND LAUGH TOO.
TRAFFIC'S SLOWING ON THIS END.

WHY'S THERE SO MUCH TRAFFIC?
THERE'S A COMIC UP THE LENGTH OF THE AVENUE!
啪

BREAKING NEWS: A GIGANTIC COMIC HAS APPEARED ALONG THE FOURTH NORTHERN BELTWAY
AND NOW FROM THE SCENE OF THE EVENT, OUR SPECIAL REPORT.
EVERYONE'S LOOKING ON QUITE ATTENTIVELY
AS WE APPROACH THE END OF THE STORY, THERE ARE FEWER CARS
THE WALLS OF MOST OF THE ROADWAY'S INTERSECTIONS ARE COVERED WITH AMAZING PICTURES.
AN UNBROKEN SERIES OF DETAILS.
IF YOU DRIVE ALONG THE FOURTH BELTWAY, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FOLLOW THE ENTIRE STORY
WAIT! LOOK! IT'S HIM!
LOOK! THE ARTIST HIMSELF, IN THE MIDDLE OF CREATION!
IT LOOKS LIKE THE STORY OF A BOY IN LOVE WITH A GIRL IN AN AD.
ZOOM IN! GET HIM ON CAMERA!
THIS IS A STUNNING SHOT! WE STUMBLED ONTO HIM!
EVERY-ONE'S LOOKING AT IT.
MANY VEHICLES HAVE STOPPED TO ADMIRE IT, JUST LIKE US.
THE BEAUTY OF THE DRAWINGS HAS EVERY DRIVER ON THE ROAD SPELLBOUND.

ARE YOU THE ONE WHO DREW ALL THIS?
TALK TO US! PLEASE! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
THE NEWSROOM WANTS TO INTERVIEW YOU ABOUT COMICS.
THIS TIME YOU'VE MADE IT, BELIEVE ME.
YOU'VE HIT THE JACK-POT!
SORRY, DON'T HAVE THE TIME
PLEASE GET OUT OF MY WAY
HEY! MY CAMERA! WATCH OUT, THAT THING'S NOT CHEAP!
NOW EVERYONE'S SEEN MY COMIC, RIGHT?
IS ANYONE GOING TO TELL ME TO CHANGE IT?
IS THAT REALLY YOUR WORK?
EXCUSE ME, I HAVE TO GO.
WAIT! I STILL HAVE LOTS OF QUESTIONS!

STOP!
MY CAMERA!
YOU CAN'T JUST TAG ANYWHERE DIDN'T YOU KNOW IT'S AGAINST THE LAW?
MANY THINGS BEGIN IN A VOID. LIFE'S JUST A SLIVER OF TIME THAT CAN'T BE MADE LONGER.
LOVE, FAME, FINISHING A BOOK, THINGS EVERYONE DREAMS ABOUT IN THEIR HEARTS...
IT TOOK MEETING A GUY LIKE YOU TO MAKE ME WANT TO CREATE COMICS AGAIN.
COMICS ARE FOR SHOWING DREAMS.
WE ALWAYS HOPE A LOT OF WEIRD METHODS WILL LEAD US TO THESE THINGS AFTER COUNTLESS DETOURS, WASTING THE BEST PARTS OF OUR LIVES THE WHOLE TIME.

YOU PLAY AT BEING THE HERO, BUT YOU'RE JUST A COWARD!
COWARD!
THE FEELING OF FLYING.
I HAVE TO GO BACK TO LIVING A NORMAL LIFE
ALL I NEEDED 2 BE HAPI WZ 2 LEAVE A GUY LYK U.
WIN OR LOSE, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? WHAT DO WE HAVE TO LOSE, IN THE END?

FAREWELL,
MY STORMY LOVER.

Afterword

by Benjamin 2004

I spent a long time creating this comic.

I wrote the script in a hospital, after I fell and broke my arm. It took me four months to finish. I never stopped going back again and again and revising, to the point that I almost missed the big OACC deadline (Oriental Animation and Comic Competition).

This comic is full of flaws: for example, the quality of certain vignettes leaves a lot to be desired (despite frequent retouches). I'd already drawn till I was dizzy, till I was numb, no longer able in the end to tell day from night.

I worked until I couldn't stay seated anymore because my butt hurt too much, and I made a chair for myself out of stacked wool blankets.

I gripped the stylus until I couldn't tell which fragments I was coloring anymore. From drawing I fell right into sleep, and then I'd pull myself from sleep to draw, my cheeks wet with drool from nightmares. I poured out my heartbreak with sobs in my voice and babbled at my friends, always putting off, like a cheater, the moment when at last I'd have to sit down at my computer again.

I finally understood why so many friends in China more gifted at drawing than I was never made it. Honestly, the work of creation is too painful and difficult. A comics creator is like a revolutionary martyr from the Zhazi caves in no man's land: valor in combat isn't enough to pull you through.

During this time, a few authors finished a few huge tomes, then more, while I was still scratching my life away over my little novella about nothing. They call that incompetence: making a lot of noise over nothing, or still being ill-adapted to the national comics scene.

This comic speaks of quests and loss. We seem to see grandeur in the quest, but on closer look, there's only confusion and selfishness. It's very possible that happiness resides precisely in what we despise and reject.

Things we lose are lost forever. We can neither change them nor take them back; life is as poor as that. Each thing possesses its own mystery and, within that mystery, objective laws govern it, which we call "the will of heaven."

Reading this comic now, I don't like it at all, despite all the time I put into it. I hungered for the truth, but all I knew how to do was cheapen it and give it a flashy beauty. The story is half-lived and half-invented, full of provocation and aggression, light-years away from the life I was living at the time; it makes me think of a soldier back from the front who, in his story, gives the stink of corpses the rosy aroma of a garden.

I'm a liar; I only tell the truth every other time.

If there's a reader clever enough to sniff out the truth in this tale, to detect any sincerity my perverseness hasn't yet swallowed, that would be my greatest reward.

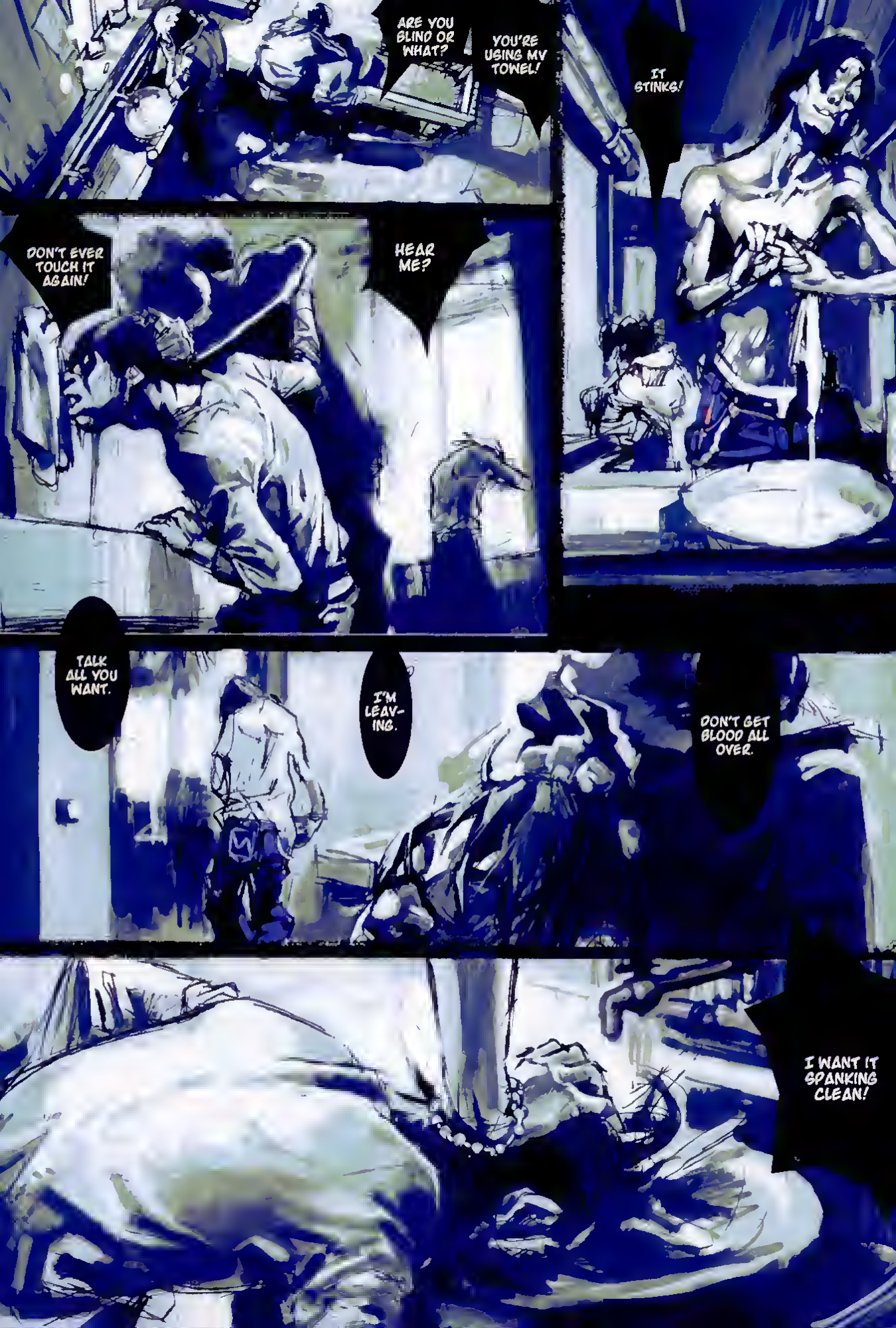
That year, that summer.
password: memories

THE YEAR I FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL I GOT CAUGHT UP IN A SLACKER CROWD. RESULT: A REAL MESS. NOTHING LEFT TO DO BUT GO BACK TO VO-TECH FOR THE ENTRANCE EXAMS TO THE FINE ARTS SCHOOL. I'D HEARD THE STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION TO THE GEN-ED COURSES AT SPECIALIZED INSTITUTIONS LIKE THAT WERE REALLY LOW--LOW ENOUGH FOR A LOSER LIKE ME TO TRY TO GET IN.
THAT YEAR, HE WAS 17 AND HIS TALENT WAS WELL-KNOWN IN HIS VILLAGE. HE WOUND UP LEAVING THE STICKS HE COULDN'T STAND ANYMORE AND HIS OLD MAN, WHO NEVER UNDERSTOOD HIS AMBITIONS, TO SET HIMSELF UP IN THE CITY, WHERE HE HOPED TO MAKE HIS DREAMS COME TRUE AT LAST.

BACK THEN, THE CRUMBLING INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS HAD A REALLY NEAT LOOK: THE SUN FILLED THE CLASSROOMS WITH LIGHT.
LILI ALWAYS CAME TO PAINT WITH HER HAIR ALL WET.
I ALWAYS FOUGHT TO SIT NEXT TO HER, AND SHAMELESSLY BREATHED IN THE SCENT OF HER SHAMPOO, DREAMING ALL THE WHILE ABOUT EATING HER UP IN ONE BITE.

HEY! WATCH YOUR STEP!
THESE ARE BRAND NEW SNEAKERS! YOU WANT TO GET PUNCHED?
THIS IS A DORM! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, HUH?

HE LIVED IN THE ROOM NEXT TO OURS. HE WAS SO POOR HE ONLY HAD ENOUGH TO BUY ONE MAN TOU* A DAY, WHICH HE BROKE IN TWO: ONE HALF FOR LUNCH AND THE OTHER FOR DINNER. HE SPENT HIS DAYS DRAWING, DRAWING LIKE A MANIAC.
YOU CALL THAT DRAWING? YOU KNOW WHAT TALENT IS? CHECK OUT VAN GOGH...
THESE SNEAKERS COST ME MORE THAN 2000 YUAN**. TRY AND FIND BETTER!
YOU'RE STILL LISTENING TO METAL? MY FRIEND PLAYS IN A HIP-HOP GROUP. WAY COOL...
!!!
HE SHARED A DORM ROOM WITH OTHER EXAM CANDIDATES, HIP CITY KIDS. THEIR LIVES WERE ALL BRAND NAME SNEAKERS, PRETTY GIRLS, AND ARTISTIC FUTURES. BUT HIS IDEAL IN LIFE WAS TO MELT INTO THE BIG CITY AND ITS CULTURE.
* white [illegible] am a roll
** about $250


ARE YOU BLIND OR WHAT?
YOU'RE USING MY TOWEL!
IT STINKS!
DON'T EVER TOUCH IT AGAIN!
HEAR ME?
TALK ALL YOU WANT.
I'M LEAV-ING.
DON'T GET BLOOD ALL OVER.
I WANT IT SPANKING CLEAN!

THE AIR WAS DAMP, WITH THUNDER IN THE DISTANCE.
I KEPT TO MYSELF AND GAZED AT THE INCESSANT ACTIVITY OF THE CAMPUS BELOW.
THIS WAS WHERE I WAS GOING TO LOVE, STUDY, AND SPEND ALL MY TIME? WAS THIS REALLY THE BRIDGE TO SUCCESS?
HEY!
YOU DRAW?
WANT A SMOKE?
huff
huff
huff
huff

THE STUDENTS ALL LIVED IN ONE BUILDING. AT NIGHT YOU COULD HEAR SINGING AND GUITARS SLAUGHTERING SCALES.
GIRLS' FRESHLY WASHED CLOTHES WERE ALWAYS DRIPPING FROM THE UPPER FLOORS. WORD HAD IT THAT THE GIRLS LET THEIR UNDERWEAR FALL ON THE GUYS' BALCONIES ON PURPOSE.
YOU OFTEN SAW COUPLES KISSING IN FRONT OF THE DOORS TO THE BUILDING. I HOPED IT'D BE MY TURN SOMEDAY.

EACH DAY, OUTSIDE OUR DOOR, GIRLS WERE ALWAYS BUSTLING AROUND, DOING THEIR LAUNDRY. WITH SLENDER ARMS AND GLOWING SKIN, THEY HUMMED OR SANG, AND IT WAS BEAUTIFUL.
WHEN I STEPPED OUT SHIRTLESS TO GO TO THE BATHROOM THEY WENT QUIET ALL OF A SUDDEN, AND THEN LET OUT LITTLE STIFLED GIGGLES.

THOSE GIRLS SURE CAN MAKE NOISE!
WITH THEIR STUPID SONGS. WHAT A DRAG!
Huh?
SOMETIMES WE'D MEET IN A COMMON AREA. I'D SMOKE AND WATCH HIM DRAW.
HEY!
CHECK IT OUT, BOYS!
WHOA!

IT WAS THE ONLY HAPPY MEMORY WE HAD IN COMMON.

ANOTHER FIGHT NEXT DOOR.
PROBABLY ONE OF THOSE CITY JERKS-- THE BIG ARTISTS-- PICKING ON THE COUNTRY BOY AGAIN.

I SAW HIM CRYING THAT AFTERNOON BY THE SINKS. HIS SHIRT WAS TORN. NONCHALANTLY, I SAID: IF YOU CAN'T STAND LIVING THERE, MOVE IN WITH US. THEN I WENT TO CLASS.
WHEN I GOT BACK I HAD A SHOCK. WATER WAS POURING OUT OF OUR ROOM.
squeak
squeeeak

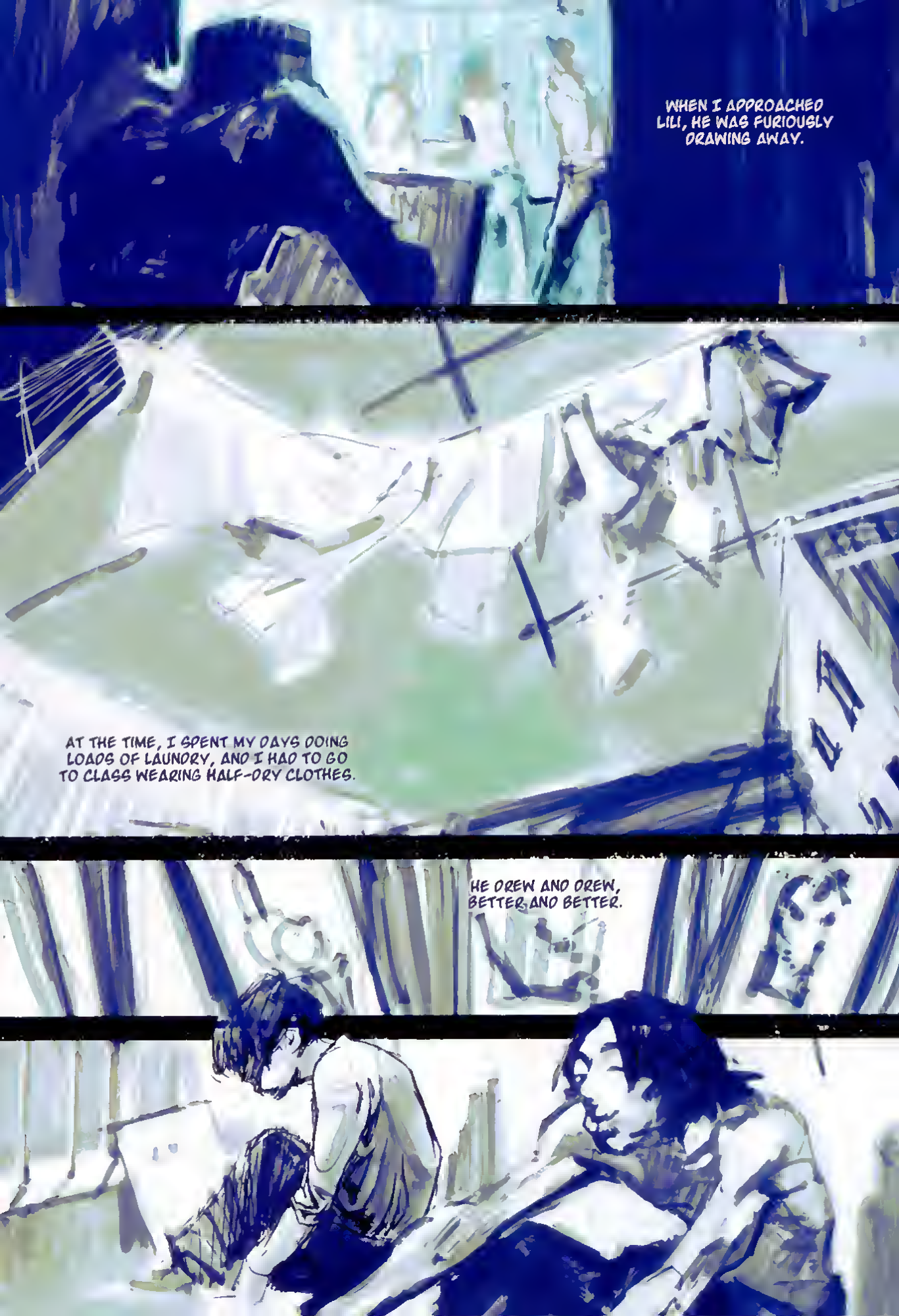
HE'D BROUGHT ALL HIS CRAP OVER.
IT'S SUCH A MESS I SWEAR I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
DIDN'T YOU INVITE HIM OVER? WE SHOULD ALL HAVE A TALK ABOUT THIS.
WHEN WE SAW HOW DISGUSTING HE WAS, WE WERE ALL SPEECHLESS.
SO, UH... HERE YOU ARE.
UHHH...

THAT NIGHT OUR NEIGHBORS THE CLASSY ARTISTS KICKED THE DOOR IN AND YELLED AT HIM, WAVING THEIR FISTS. HE'D ALSO BROUGHT THE CHAIRS FROM NEXT DOOR WITH HIM.
SORRY! SORRY!
HEY! YOU!
I REALLY COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.
GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERE!
LEAVE AND TAKE YOUR FREAKIN' CHAIRS! NOW!
THAT WAS HIS FIRST NIGHT AMONG US.

FRANKLY, HE WASN'T AN EASY GUY FOR EVERYONE TO PUT UP WITH.
HE WAS SELFISH, A SLOB, WEAK BY NATURE AND BAD WITH PEOPLE. HE WAS ALWAYS ALONE.
HIS MASHED-UP FACE TESTIFIED TO THE FACT THAT HIS LIFE HADN'T IMPROVED.

THE GIRLS SANG POSHU'S SONG.
I CAN SEE HIM
IT'S SUNNY ALL OVER
THE CITY'S HAPPINESS
FLIES UP TO THE SKY
THE NEW WORLD IS HERE
LIKE IN A DREAM
LEAVE ME IN THE DARK
DOES YOUR OLD POCKETWATCH STILL WORK?
DO YOU STILL WEAR YOUR OLD SANDALS?
I'VE GOT A CIGARETTE.
A BRAND NEW BRAND
YOU SHOULD TRY IT
TAKE A PUFF
TOMORROW MORNING
IT'LL BE BEAUTIFUL
I KNOW IT FOR SURE
I'LL DO THE WASHING MYSELF
LEAVE ALL THIS VIE BOHÈME BEHIND
OH, IT'LL BE PERFECT!
COME QUICK!
I'LL LET THE PENTIUM COMPUTERS
DO MY THINKING FOR ME
CHANGE MY CLOTHES
CUT YOUR HAIR
DITCH WINDOWS 98
MAKE YOURSELF PRETTY
LOOK EIGHTEEN
IT'S PARADISE
OUR LIFE IS SWEET AS CANDY.
AT THE TIME, I SPENT MY DAYS READING COMICS IN THE DORM. HE ALSO HID AWAY IN THE ROOM--MAYBE TO AVOID BEATINGS--AND DREW.

I SAW LILI.
CHANGE MY CLOTHES
CUT YOUR HAIR
DITCH WINDOWS 98
THERE'LL BE NO
MORE HARDSHIP
IN OUR PATH, OUR FUTURE
WILL BE FULL OF PASSION
YEAH! YOU TOO?
BA BA WO WO!
FOLLOW THE PATH
IMAGINE THE GIFTS
THE FUTURE HAS
IN STORE.


WHEN I APPROACHED LILI, HE WAS FURIOUSLY DRAWING AWAY.
AT THE TIME, I SPENT MY DAYS DOING LOADS OF LAUNDRY, AND I HAD TO GO TO CLASS WEARING HALF-DRY CLOTHES.
HE DREW AND DREW, BETTER AND BETTER.

ONE DAY I FOUND HIS DRAWING BOARD TRAMPLED AND BROKE.
I RACED AFTER THE POOR KID, WHO WASN'T FAR.
YOU'RE TOO COOL!
YOU'RE AWESOME, YOU'VE GOT A PAIR OF WAY COOL SNEAKERS!
YOU ROCK!
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WITH TALENT!
SO TOO BAD YOUR FACE HAS TO GET SMASHED IN, COUNTRY BOY!

NEXT THING, THE SCENE CAUSED SO MUCH RUCKUS THAT OUR TWO DORM ROOMS CAME TO BLOWS, ALL BECAUSE OF HIM.

HE STAYED CURLED UP IN A CORNER, HIS BROKEN DRAWING BOARD IN ONE HAND, AS THOUGH HE'D MADE A SERIOUS MISTAKE.
THAT DAY WAS FULL OF HAPPINESS. I GOT DRUNK.
THEY CAME BACK AGAIN?
WE'D ALL BUT FORGOTTEN THE LEADER OF THE BAD GUYS.

THE RAINY SEASON APPROACHED.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? YOU INTERESTED?
JUST LOOK AT HOW YOU ACT!
THAT NIGHT SOMETHING UNBELIEVABLE HAPPENED.

HE KICKED THE DOOR OF HIS OLD ROOM OPEN.
THE NOISE WOKE THEM ALL UP IN CONFUSION.
AFTER STRIDING ACROSS THE ROOM, HE CLIMBED UP ON THE WINDOWSILL.
AAAAH!
AH YA YA YA YA!

THEN HE TURNED AROUND, RADIATING DEMENTED PRIDE.
EVERYONE WAS AWAKE, BUT THERE WASN'T A SOUND.
HOWEVER ARROGANT THEY'D ALWAYS BEEN, NONE OF THE OTHER STUDENTS DARED BREATHE AN ANGRY WORD.

THEN...
HEY, WAKE UP! TIME FOR CLASS.
AAAAAAAAAAAH!
THEN HE CURLED UP UNDER HIS SHEETS, OCCASIONALLY SCREAMING LIKE A MADMAN.

WE ALL REALIZED HE'D GONE CRAZY.
THERE WERE ALWAYS BLOODSTAINS ON HIS SHEETS NO ONE KNEW WHY.
FARO
WHEREVER HE WENT, THE STINK OF HIS BODY DROVE PEOPLE AWAY.
WHEN HE WALKED DOWN THE HALLS, THE GIRLS TALKED ABOUT HIM OPENLY, WITHOUT EVEN LOWERING THEIR VOICES.

LATER, WE LOST TRACK OF HIM.
THE DAYS WENT BY REALLY FAST; IT WAS ALMOST TIME FOR THE FINAL EXAM. THAT STEAMY SUMMER, EVERYONE WOULD GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS.
REMEMBER THAT WEIRDO, LILI?
ONE TIME WE WERE HERE AND WE LOOKED UP.
YEAH, I WONDER WHERE HE IS NOW, TOO.
UNTIL A MONTH LATER...

HEY, YOU WOULDN'T BE--
HEY, SAY SOMETHING!
ARE YOU SICK? WHERE WERE YOU? A MONTH! A WHOLE MONTH!
DON'T CRY.
LOOK, HE'S GOT SOMETHING TO PLUG HIS EARS!

LILI PULLED MORE LITTLE PAPER BALLS OUT THAN WE BELIEVED A HUMAN EAR COULD HOLD.
IT WAS CLEAR HE'D DESCENDED TO SUCH A STATE OF MADNESS...
...THAT HE'D TORN UP DRAWING PAPER AND FILLED HIS EARS WITH IT.

MY SON... WHERE WERE YOU ALL THIS TIME?
EVERYONE LOOKED FOR YOU IN VAIN.
I WENT TO BEIJING.
I WANED TO SEE WHAT THE CENTRAL FINE ARTS INSTITUTE LOOKED LIKE.
WHY ALL THE PAPER IN YOUR EARS?
I HEARD A YOUNG GIRL SINGING ALL THE TIME.

SHE WOULDN'T STOP SINGING!
SHE SANG AND SANG AND SANG...
WEEPING, HIS OLD FATHER LOADED HIS INSANE SON ON HIS BIKE.
MY SON...
HE TOOK HIS SON--HIS AMBITIOUS SON, WHOSE HEART HAD BEEN FULL OF INNOCENCE, WHO'D DROWNED IN THE BIG CITY'S ABANDON--BACK TO THE VILLAGE

THERE ARE UNFINISHED STORIES THAT ARE ENOUGH ON THEIR OWN.
GO BACK LATER TO SIFT OUT TRUTH FROM LIES AMONG THESE FEELINGS
WEEDS SPRING UP, THERE ARE NO NEW FLOWERS.
YOU WERE LUCKY TO HAVE HAD FOUR SEASONS IN BYGONE DAYS
THEY'VE ALL GROWN OLD. WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
I WAS LUCKY TO WITNESS THEIR FLOWERING
AHEAD, THE WIND HAS SCATTERED THEM ACROSS THE HORIZON
ONCE EXAMS WERE OVER, WE LEFT THAT PATHETIC TIME BEHIND.
LILI AND ME RAN UP TO THE ROOF TERRACE AND THREW OUT ALL OUR BOOKS AND NOTES.

THAT'S HOW THAT TIME IN MY LIFE ENDED. SO MUCH PAIN, SO MUCH INSANITY, AND MOMENTS OF HAPPINESS: FORGET THEM ALL. SHE PASSED HER EXAM: SHE WAS SO HAPPY! DID SHE KNOW IT? I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HER.

Afterword

by Benjamin 2003

It's difficult to forget the period when I drew "That Year, That Sumer." Under my useless management, our studio was quickly sinking. Everyone was gathering their things, phoning arrangements for traveling home, and making plans for their personal futures after the dissolution.

As Gaochang, who was more than a brother to me, was having hard times at home, he was the first to return to his family, gnawed at by worry.

He left just in time, because that was when SARS hit, spreading terror.

Because of the epidemic, no one could leave. Despite the total collapse of the studio, the group couldn't split up.

Without anywhere to go, we watched a dumb, boring TV miniseries—*Miss Rose*—together in the main room. Our sarcastic comments were much funnier and more successful than its dull plot.

Amidst the laughter of those watching, I sat at my computer in pain, and drew this story.

When I was tired of drawing, Wulala would teach me tai chi and sword exercises.

As a result, I exploited Agu and Yanzhuo, forcing them to cook, clean, and take care of two utterly amoral Siamese cats.

One night, I got a call from my best friend. Feverish, she wept into the phone; she gave me her bank account number. She wanted to leave me all her money.

I thought only of dying with her.

No one died. We only drifted apart. With the SARS scare over, the others went home. I bid each of them goodbye with a wave of my hand; with a little smile, I watched them draw away.

I know our time together was short-lived. If they think of me one day and look back on that time, I'll be happy. Life is made of goodbyes, but arguments one day end up turning into beautiful memories.

How many reunions and goodbyes do I still have to go through on the wheel of life to be allowed to find you again? What dust will the world be made of then? Our ties can't be broken yet; we're too young.

In the empty room, I watched Miss Rose by myself. The miniseries we made fun of for a month came to an end before the eyes of a man alone. Who would've thought I'd be a little sorry to see it go?

When it was done, "That Year, That Summer" got bad comments from the editors at the publishing house.

Whatever other people say, it's a much better work than any of my other comics, in terms of merit and sincerity. Reading it reminds me of an unforgettable slice of life.

Oh, my friends from the studio days, I love you!